VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

BY AN OLD MAID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

THE RECLUSE.

AMONGST numerous persons standing high in the estimation of society, for intellectual acquirements and genuine worth, who were upon terms of friendship with my father, was Colonel Thornville. He had spent many years abroad, and during that time had acquired a store of interesting anecdotes, which his peculiar though delightful mode of repeating, rendered extremely pleasing and instructive to his companions. Seldom did a day pass, during his visits at Southend, in which he did not relate some singular or affecting event, of which he had either been a witness or participator. But nothing he

ever related made so strong an impression on my feelings as the following narrative, which, having in the first instance written out from memory only, was afterwards freed from some errors, by my obtaining Colonel Thornville's permission to copy such manuscripts as he had in his possession on the subject.

I have ever been of opinion (said Colonel Thornville), that a country can be seen to the greatest advantage on a pedestrious tour. I have in the course of my life made many such, and have invariably found them attended with equal pleasure and improvement. To my young friends I recommend a walking tour, in preference to any other mode of seeing the world, as it invigorates the frame, at the same time that it enables them to gain a more just estimate of the lower order of people, of whatever country they may be travelling through—who, after all, form the national character—whilst it impoverishes the purse but little; and (should this consideration otherwise prove immaterial) they will thus have an opportunity of contributing more liberally to many of those wants, which will inevitably become known to them in their pro-

gress through the country. In addition to all these inducements, I must acknowledge that I was always partial to the exercise which I thus commend; in consequence of which, during a long life, I have *walked* some thousands of miles! Although I had travelled far in other climes, there was on my return from India great part of England still unexplored by me. I therefore gladly accepted the invitation of an old messmate, who having turned his sword into a ploughshare, had fixed his residence in the finest part of the rich and beautiful vale of Aire, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. After quitting the hospitable mansion of my friend, I proceeded through several parts of that county, to which I was still a stranger.

Not only as an admirer of nature in every variety of form, but as a botanist did I traverse with peculiar pleasure many of these noble woods, which have there sprung up spontaneously from the earth, and abound in rare botanical plants; or climb the rugged rocks with which they are interspersed, whence the knotted oak rears its tall head, twining its roots around the uneven surface, which ap-

pears scarcely to afford nourishment for the moss and fern peeping through the crevices, much less for the stately king of the forest! With equal interest did I spend days in strolling over barren moors, where only the tinkling of the sheep-bell, the barking of the shepherd's dog, or crowing of the moor-cock, were to be heard, until warned by the approach of evening that it was time to seek shelter for the night; when, in descending from the mountains, I generally obtained a view of some beautiful woody valley or picturesque glen, thickly studded with habitations, yet so lovely and romantic in its most prominent features, that I might have fancied I beheld a second Eden, had it not been disfigured by some huge, misshapen manufactory, which too frequently in this great commercial district defaces the most beautiful and romantic situation.

But as I have undertaken to relate an adventure which befel me, rather than to describe the beauties of the country through which I had previously rambled, I will only add, that for some days prior to that event, I had been in Wharfdale, enjoying the singularly picturesque

and beautiful scenery around Bolton Abbey, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire.

To enable me to see every part of this romantic place with more ease, I took up my abode at a small village within a short distance of the abbey.

Upon one occasion, my rambles having extended to an unusual distance from my humble dwelling, I suddenly found myself at the entrance of a sequestered hamlet, consisting of ten or twelve cottages and a small church, which stood at the foot of a hill, covered with wood, and forming a back-ground to the whole hamlet. In front ran a murmuring brook, across which was a rudely-constructed, but picturesque wooden bridge, for foot passengers.

Pleased with the air of repose which reigned over this secluded spot, I stood some time leaning on the railing of the bridge, and listening to the gurgling of the water passing over its stony bed, without being aware how time fled, until aroused from my revery by a childish voice asking leave to pass. On turning round, I perceived one of the loveliest boys I had ever seen; he appeared about five years of age, and was

followed by a respectable-looking woman, whom I judged to be his nurse. As the boy gazed earnestly upon me ere he walked by, I answered his inquiring look by some passing remark, and then asked the servant the name of the place.

"Denmore, sir."

"And that?" said I, pointing to a pretty white cottage, with a gay flower-garden in front, "is the parsonage, I suppose?"

"It is, sir."

"And this fine little boy is the clergyman's son, no doubt?"

"No, I am mamma's boy," replied the child.

"Who, then, is so fortunate as to be your mamma?" asked I, smiling.

"That," said he, pointing to a cottage on the opposite side of the stream, which was nearly lost amid flowering shrubs and evergreens, "that is my mamma's house; will you go with me to see her?"

"Fie, Master Horace," exclaimed his attendant, who had by sundry efforts been endeavouring to lead him away; "you know my mistress is not well enough to see strangers."

The child coloured, and said, "I had forgot that; but if mamma knew you, you would not be a stranger, and then she would be glad to see you."

The servant appearing impatient to be gone, I shook hands with the little fellow, and once more resumed my meditative position. The thread of my thoughts had been broken, I therefore commenced a new subject. "What a fine, lovely boy that is!" I inwardly exclaimed; "happy must be the parent of such a child! Why did I not marry in early life?—I might now have been the grandfather of such a boy; instead of which, here am I, a poor, forlorn bachelor, already more than fifty years of age, without a human being to care whether I live or die—except, perhaps, a few of those who term themselves my friends, and who wonder whether I shall leave my property to them, or endow an hospital. It is not yet too late—I may marry, and perhaps have a fine family of my own. No, no; I will not try so hazardous an experiment; I have been too long accustomed to live alone, and am too fond of my own little whims and fancies, to make a desirable husband,

therefore I must be satisfied to sink into my grave, neither loved, regretted, nor attended, but by mercenaries."

How much longer I might have continued musing upon this interesting subject I know not, had I not suddenly discovered that the shade of the trees on the water was becoming indistinct, and recollecting at the same moment that I had several miles to walk in a strange country, I turned quickly round, and in so doing verified the truth of the old proverb of "most haste and least speed," for by moving with too much rapidity, I twisted my ankle and fell prostrate. A countryman at that time passing assisted me to rise, but when I had done so, I found myself unable to walk, or even rest the slightest weight upon that ankle; fearing I had dislocated it, I inquired if a medical man resided near?

"Anan," answered the clod with a vacant stare.

"Does a doctor live near this place?"

"Noa, sar."

"What can I do?" said I, quite perplexed, and in great pain.

"Goa to't parson's," said he; and away he ran, without waiting for my assent.

I supported myself against a stump at the end of the bridge until he returned, which he did in a few minutes, accompanied by a pleasing and respectable-looking man, whom I soon found was the clergyman of the parish. He urged me to take up my abode for the night at his cottage, assuring me I could get no medical aid beyond his own, within a considerable distance, and that in all common cases he prescribed for his flock. I most thankfully accepted his offered hospitality, having, indeed, no alternative. With the assistance of this worthy man and my friend *Clod*, I was removed to the next little parsonage, where I was kindly welcomed by an agreeable-looking and motherly sort of person, who was introduced to me as the mistress of the mansion.

When Mr. Morley (which I found was the name of my host) had examined my ankle, he declared it to be a violent sprain, for which he prescribed rest and fomentation. The following day I found myself quite unable to use the injured limb, and therefore gladly accepted the

pressing invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Morley, to remain their guest. Being literally tied by the leg, I was glad to have as much of the worthy pastor's company as he could spare from the duties of his parish. His conversation was sensible, though strongly tinctured by the life of almost primeval simplicity he had led; and if, in the anecdotes he frequently related of his scholastic days, he mingled somewhat of the pedantry of the schoolmaster, I suffered not a smile to appear on my lips at the worthy pedagogue's anxiety to show his classic lore.

Mr. Morley's history was soon told. He was, he said, the son of poor, though respectable parents, who having educated him at a neighbouring grammar-school, somewhat beyond their means, in consequence of his having shown an early taste for learning, were repaid by seeing him, before they died, become head usher to the master by whom he had been educated, with a salary of £20 per annum, in addition to his board.

"That," continued he, "was a proud day to my poor father and mother! At length, my worthy master (who was rector of the parish

too) wanted a curate, and kindly recommended me to the archbishop to be ordained. As I undertook this duty in addition to the former one, my salary was raised to thirty pounds. I then thought I might venture upon an union with an amiable creature to whom I had been attached almost from childhood. Her youth, and with it, many of her personal charms had fled, 'twas true; but to me she still was peerless as when first the chosen idol of my heart, for as Crabbe says,

> "There's beauty that will last
> When the rose withers, and the bloom be past."

"She readily at my request gave up the situation of companion and housekeeper to an elderly lady, where she had saved £200, to become the wife of a man to whom she had been for so many years engaged. Although I still continued to dine with the boys, we had some difficulty to clothe ourselves decently, and live upon our small income; but, thanks to my wife's excellent management, we did so. A few years after our marriage, we were made completely happy by the offer of this curacy, with an in-

come of fifty pounds a year, the house, garden, and a small field."

Thus ended Mr. Morley's simple narrative, and I had afterwards an opportunity of ascertaining that this excellent pair were in the daily exercise of various acts of charity and benevolence; and lived, liked Goldsmith's clergyman, who, "passing rich with forty pounds a year," exceeded them not in all the kindly virtues of humanity.

As we were seated one evening at tea, I inquired of Mr. Morley to whom the beautiful boy belonged, whose engaging appearance and manner had attracted my admiration a short time previous to meeting with the accident which made me his guest.

He shook his head and gravely replied, "Poor boy! I fear the world has not dealt fairly by his mother."

"How?" said I, "what do you mean?"

"Who the lady is who owns that sweet boy, we know not, except that her name is Seymour, that she is out of health, and appears to have suffered much unhappiness. Nearly four years have elapsed since she came to reside in this

hamlet, and of her history I know no more than the day on which she arrived. All I do know I will inform you of. In the month of March, in the year ——, a chaise drove through Denmore; which, as we are not near any public road, and there is not one gentleman's house in the neighbourhood, is a circumstance of rare occurrence: consequently when such an event does take place, it excites some surprise and curiosity. From this cause, I observed it with attention, and in about half an hour perceived that it returned, and stopped in front of an empty cottage, with the words 'To be sold' written upon it in chalk. A female, whose appearance was that of an upper servant, alighted from the chaise, and asked who was the owner of the cottage; on being told, 'Simon Watts, the bricklayer,' she proceeded to his house, and shortly returned with him, when they went into the cottage together. In a few minutes she again got into the chaise, which immediately was driven off.

"As it passed me, I observed a lady in black seated in it. On inquiring of Simon as to what had taken place between him

and the female whom I had seen with him, he replied, 'I have made a good day's work, for I have sold the cottage, garden, and little field for three hundred pounds.'—'Indeed, Simon, you have been a lucky fellow, should your payment prove sure,' said I. 'I think I shall be paid, sir, for Quill, the attorney, at ——, is to take possession, and to pay the money down immediately.' Well, sir, the following day Quill actually did take possession, and pay for the purchase; he then gave directions for rooms being added at the back of the house, sent people to plant evergreens and shrubs, and frequently came himself to look after the workpeople, and expedite the work. In May the building was completed, and in two months more the house was ready to enter.

"When all was in readiness to receive the new owner, my wife and I went, at Simon's invitation (who was employed as principal workman), to view the cottage, and were surprised to see how great the alterations were, with so little visible change towards the road—how expeditiously, and yet how well every thing was done. To be sure, there was

no high or elaborate finish to the rooms, but they looked genteel and comfortable. There were two pretty parlours, with windows to the ground, placed at the back of the house, opening upon a flower-garden and lawn, with two bed-rooms, and a dressing-room above them. The cottage was covered with trellis-work, against which a variety of choice and ornamental creepers were planted; the furniture was simple and convenient, but there were plain evidences throughout the whole place, that no vulgar mind had made choice of this residence.

"We were, you may suppose, wishful to see our new neighbour, who arrived at Delamore late one evening, and as before, in a postchaise. I naturally expected to see her at church on the following sabbath; instead of which, two Sundays elapsed without her appearance. This I now felt inclined to attribute to her being a Roman Catholic, since a stone cross had been affixed to the gable end of her cottage, which at the time I had supposed only intended for ornament. No sooner did this idea occur to me than I proceeded to question Simon Watts on

the subject, who replied that he knew nothing of the religion of the lady; but that her attendant, who had first spoken to him about the house, inquired particularly respecting the church and clergyman: 'indeed,' continued Simon, 'I think the account I gave of your worship, partly made them buy my house. As to the stone cross, I dug it up in the garden, and just put it up by way of a bit of ornament.'

"On further inquiry, I was told that the owner of the cottage was a very young and a very pretty woman, accompanied by an infant, not much more than twelve months old; from her dress she was supposed to be a widow, but as hitherto she had not walked beyond her garden, no near view had been obtained of her. Having communicated to my wife what I had heard, we came to the very natural conclusion, that there was too much mystery in the case for all to be right. Why should a young widow, possessed, as Mrs. Seymour appeared to be, of an independent fortune, fix upon a residence amongst entire strangers? It was, we thought, much more probable that she was an unfortunate victim of seduction, who had come to reside in our

sequestered village, as a desirable place in which to hide her misery and shame.

"Thus believing, I thought it my duty to prepare an appropriate sermon: my text was, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' I endeavoured, as well as I was able, to point out the heinousness of the offence of which I imagined her to have been guilty, and concluded my discourse by stating the promise of forgiveness which is held out to the truly penitent sinner. This sermon I took to church every Sunday without having an opportunity of making use of it for a month. At the end of that time, immediately after taking my place at the reading-desk, Mrs. Seymour entered, attired in weeds; her crape veil was so deep, that as she walked up the aisle to her pew, immediately opposite the pulpit, I could not see her face. Her manner during prayers was extremely devout.

"I don't know that I ever felt more anxious to redeem a sinner from the paths of vice than on the present occasion. There was in her deep mourning—her seemingly utter friendlessness—the humility of her attitude when in

prayer—and the touching melody of the few notes of which I caught the sound, as she joined in the psalms—something which affected my feelings in an unusual degree. As I repeated my text, I for a moment fixed my eyes upon Mrs. Seymour, and observed her face turned towards me in earnest and devout attention. When I beheld that sweet, but woe-worn countenance, I half repented the intention with which I had commenced my discourse, of probing her to the quick. In momentary confusion, I withdrew my eyes, when recollecting in *whose* house and in *whose* service I was, I quickly regained my self-possession, and preached with more than my usual energy. But notwithstanding my new parishioner listened to me with the most profound attention, she gave no sign of a wounded conscience: the sermon appeared to affect her no more than any other individual in the church, except inasmuch as she gave more undivided attention to it; for I am ashamed to say, that my congregation in general were so occupied in observing the stranger, that, although I consider it one of the best sermons I have ever written, I do not think it had so great an effect as my

discourses usually have. But to proceed: the lady left her pew, looking so calm and tranquil, that I began to doubt the truth of my hypothesis.

"Since Mrs. Seymour had now openly and avowedly become one of my flock, I thought it my duty no longer to delay calling upon her, and, accordingly, paid my respects the following day. I was instantly admitted, and found her seated on a couch, with her lovely boy at her feet. Her manner appeared so superior to any thing to which I had been accustomed, that at first I felt somewhat abashed: however, as my visit was one of pure benevolence——"

"And a *leetle* curiosity," interrupted his wife, smiling.

"Perhaps there might," continued Mr. Morley, "unknown to myself, be some such feeling lurking beneath the surface, for how rarely do we know all the motives which prompt us to act; but my belief was, that I was actuated only by a wish to do my duty towards a stranger, who had come to reside in my parish; and to pay that attention which is due from a Christian minister to those who are in affliction, from

whatever cause it may originate. Mine was the tongue which, whilst it endeavoured to wake the sinner to repentance, sought, with equal readiness, to pour balm into the wounds of the penitent and the mourner.

"With such wishes and intentions, I visited Mrs. Seymour; but there was in the simple dignity of her manner that which so entirely repelled familiarity, whilst it excited admiration and respect, that I could only offer any services in my power to render her residence amongst us more agreeable; adding, that if not unpleasant, my wife would be happy to pay her respects. To this she replied, that although her health was so delicate as to preclude the possibility of seeing any other company, she should be happy to receive the visits of myself and Mrs. Morley.

"I am very fond of children, and having taken some notice of the fine little fellow playing at his mother's feet, he contrived to reach my chair, and make sundry efforts to climb upon my knees. His ready confidence won my regard, and from that moment we were firm friends. My wife being a good deal occupied in her household affairs, only occasionally visits

the *recluse*, as we call her, whilst I more frequently go there.

"About twelve months ago, observing her appear a good deal fatigued after hearing her son's lessons, I proposed being his instructer; to this she said she would gladly assent, if I would receive an annual stipend; but as it was my own proposal, and, as I assured her, made partly from regard to the young urchin, and partly from a lingering affection to my old habits, I would not hear of it. At last the affair was compromised by an agreement on my part, to receive a salary when my pupil should arrive at the age of six. In the interim, this generous lady has showered her bounty upon us. Nearly all the books to your right are her gift—the port wine you praised yesterday was a present from her to my wife, after she had been ill: in fact, she has repaid me a thousand times for any little services I may have been able to render her."

After thanking Mr. Morley for his narrative, "Is it possible," said I, "that seeing so much of Mrs. Seymour as you do, you have no idea who she is, or whence she comes?"

"None whatever; during the four years she has resided here, no individual has visited her; she receives but few letters, and appears to have little or no communication with the world, beyond Denmore. To the poor she is extremely kind; when her health would admit of it, she frequently visited the sick and aged amongst them; but, latterly, her own weakness has increased so much, that she has been utterly unable to extend her walks beyond her garden."

"From what source do you suppose her income to arise; for, judging from what you say, she does not appear in want of money?"

"By no means," replied Mr. Morley, "she not only has all the necessaries and conveniences of life, but many of its luxuries and elegances—a well-chosen, though not extensive library—a fine-toned cabinet pianoforte and harp, on both of which she plays (or rather did play) most beautifully; for her harp she rarely touches, since she has been obliged, on account of the delicacy of her lungs, to give up singing. So sweet and plaintive was her voice, that as I listened to her melodious

yet melancholy notes, I used to think that like the swan of the poets, she would die singing."

My curiosity and interest were alike awakened by the account I had received of the fair inmate of the cottage. I requested Mr. Morley would invite the boy to come in, the next time he visited the parsonage, having heard that he had been there the preceding day, to inquire after me. Scarcely had I ceased speaking, when a servant entered, saying, that Master Seymour and his maid had called to know how the gentleman was. Mr. Morley instantly went out, and returned with the fine little fellow, whom I had been so much pleased with on my first interview. He made many inquiries respecting my ankle, and we parted with a promise on his part to visit me daily, if his mamma would give him leave. I was then, as indeed I still am, extremely fond of children, and having no relations of my own, have been the friend, companion, and playmate of all the children of my acquaintance; but with none had I ever been so much charmed as with this boy. There was in his countenance an expression of arch intelligence, combined with good hu-

mour, that was quite irresistible—his bright blue eyes fringed with long dark lashes—his ruby lips and fair clear skin, just tinged with the roseate hue of health, but deepening into a fine bloom, when in animated conversation—his light and graceful figure, of which every movement was such, as to show the elegance and symmetry of his limbs to the greatest advantage—altogether formed such a combination, as a painter would have wished to copy.

Mrs. Seymour readily granted her son's request to visit me daily, and each day the length of his visits increased, until they sometimes extended to a couple of hours. Having some talent for storytelling, I had no difficulty in adapting descriptions of many of the interesting places I had visited, or extraordinary scenes I had witnessed, to the capacity of my young friend, who was not only pleased, but frequently almost in ecstasies, at the narrative to which he listened. I thought it probable that Mrs. Seymour more readily acceded to her son's wish to be with me, from perceiving that he derived not only amusement, but information, during his visits. Accustomed to an

active life, I felt my long confinement extremely irksome; I had already been three weeks at Denmore, and knew not how much longer I might have to remain, at any rate I feared my pedestrian excursions for the summer were at an end.

Anxious to breathe the fresh air, I procured the aid of crutches, when seeing a Bath chair advertised for sale in York, I sent to purchase it, and was by that means enabled to extend my rambles with great advantage to my health and spirits.

As Mrs. Seymour had repeatedly sent to thank me for my kindness to her child, I ventured to make a request that she would admit me to pay my respects to herself; to this she acceded, and I hastened to take advantage of her assent. Although I had been prepared to see a lovely and interesting young woman, my expectations were far outdone by the reality I have seen beauty in courts—in palaces—in cottages; but never did I see any creature who appeared to me so transcendently beautiful as Mrs. Seymour then did! Her figure, which might be termed tall, was, although attenuated

most perfectly formed; her eyes, like her son's, were a dark and brilliant blue; her nose and forehead Grecian, with dark arched eyebrows, and long lashes, which softened the brilliancy of her eyes; the contour of her mouth was perfect, but her lips, which opening, disclosed two rows of teeth like pearls, were encircled by a pale line, more indicative of ill-health, than any other part of her appearance; her complexion was like the most beautiful rouge, whilst her dark and glossy hair, being braided simply across her forehead, contrasted well with its extreme fairness. All this is easily described, but there was in her appearance that which I have no power to paint—her countenance was so mild, so gentle, so free from all the evil passions of this world, so heavenly, that I felt as if I could have gazed upon it for ever!

I was received by Mrs. Seymour not merely courteously, but kindly, and thanked far beyond my deserts, for having noticed her boy. Thanks were rather, as I told her, due from me to her, for having allowed him to enliven my solitude, during my tedious confinement. Our conversation then took a more general turn, and I

perceived that Mrs. Seymour was not only a woman of education and superior attainments, but that her manners had been formed in the best of schools—good society. Ere I departed, she asked me again to visit her. Nothing loth, I readily acceded to her wish, and not only kept my promise, but in a short time became almost as intimate with the mother, as I had before been with her lovely son. Upon one occasion, I expressed my fear that I deprived her of too much of her child's society.

"Oh, no," she replied, "I wish him to be with you, as it is of service to him. I sometimes fear that I ought to send him from me altogether, but for so great a sacrifice, I have not resolution. My complaint is, I know, consumptive, and I am so fearful that Horace may imbibe it in my breath, that I have long ago removed his sleeping apartment as far from me as this cottage will admit; I never suffer him to enter my bed-room, and even before he comes into the room in which I sit, I have it ventilated, and pungent essences dispersed. I cannot, during the short time I have to live, deprive myself of my only earthly solace, and

I trust the Almighty will, in his mercy, spare him, both for his own happiness, and for the vindication of his mother's fame."

As she spoke thus, the tremour in her voice, and her agitated countenance, induced me to take her hand, and beseech her, as indeed I had before done, to have some good advice.

"Advice, my friend, look at my hollow cheek and wasted form; can advice be of service to these? Or 'who can minister to a mind diseased?' Oh, no, no, advice cannot now, it never could, have been of use to me. A physician would probably order me to a warmer climate—and for what? to die on the road from fatigue, or in a foreign country, amongst strangers, and without any of the comforts of home. No, my dear sir; here, in my own little cottage, I hope to die, and in that churchyard," pointing towards it, "I hope to be buried. Soon it may take place; at any rate, I shall not be long here, and I have but one wish ere I die, which is to place my child in safety."

As this lovely young woman thus spoke, the tears fell from my eyes upon the hand which I still retained in mine. She looked at me for an

instant, and then, with a flushed cheek, and sudden animation of manner, she exclaimed, taking my other hand in hers, and looking earnestly in my face, " Will you, Colonel Thornville, be a friend, a father to my child ?"

" I will be both, so help me, Heaven ! " I answered with fervour.

Mrs. Seymour burst intc tears; when pressing one of the emaciated transparent hands which I still held in mine, to my lips, I hurried from the room unable longer to repress the emotion with which I was overpowered.

So entirely was my mind occupied by this affecting conversation, that until I arrived at the Parsonage I was not aware that I had walked without my stick !

A few days after this, Mr. Morley and I prevailed upon Mrs. Seymour to see a very eminent medical practitioner from Leeds.

" If it will be any satisfaction to you, my kind friends, I should, indeed, be ungrateful not to accede to your request, tnerefore send for him if you wish it."

We accordingly requested his attendance: the result was what Mrs. Seymour expected

and we feared, that nothing could save her, though she might yet linger some time.

Upon finding that I could walk without having recourse to any assistance, I discarded my Bath chair, and all the other attendants upon lameness and infirmity; but as there were many beautiful situations in the neighbourhood of Denmore yet unexplored by me, I determined still to make the Parsonage my head-quarters (having prevailed upon Mr. Morley to allow me to remunerate him for my board and lodging), by which means I should be upon the spot, in case any sudden change for the worse took place in Mrs. Seymour, and should be enabled to take immediate charge of my sweet little *protégé*, who daily entwined himself more closely around my heart. Added to all this, I had become so much interested in my host and hostess, and pleased with a simplicity of character so unusual, that I did not wish to exchange their society for any other, however highly polished. During my various little excursions, my absence from Denmore never exceeded three or four days, at the expiration of which period, I was always cordially welcomed

back by Mr. and Mrs. Morley, and my young favourite. Each time that I returned, I perceived that Mrs. Seymour was changed visibly for the worse. I frequently visited her, but her system seemed so unequal to bearing any agitation, that I feared to allude to the conversation she had held with me respecting her son. One day, when seated alone with her, I made some observations on the beauty and fragrance of the roses which were blooming in full luxuriance in front of her cottage. Looking at them with a sweet but melancholy smile, she replied,

"They are, indeed, beautiful, yet in a few weeks these shrubs, with their sweet and lovely flowers and luxuriant foliage of green, will be withered and dead—a bare and unsightly stem will alone be left; another summer will ensue, and they will bud and blossom again in full beauty; what eyes may then behold them, we know not. Mine will be closed long ere that time arrives."

I was painfully affected, and made a vain effort to say, that I hoped she might yet see many summers; the words died away on my lips, they seemed but a mockery, for already

she had scarcely a particle of earth about her!

"Do not, my friend," she continued, "attempt to persuade me I am not dying. I have only one tie to this world; but that one is so powerful, that, in spite of disease and sorrow, it has held me here, and still would do so, had not my complaint lately gained such additional strength as to overcome every obstacle. I feel that my time is now very short, but you have smoothed my passage to the grave, by promising to become the guardian of my Horace. That I should have selected a stranger for such an office, has no doubt surprised you; but to me you are no stranger in name or character, I therefore gladly availed myself of your kind partiality to my beloved child. Mr. Morley long ago promised his protection for my boy, but he requires a guardian who is more able to compete with the villany of a powerful family. When I am no more, you will find in that bureau a packet, addressed to yourself, containing the narrative of my life; you will, likewise, find there my will, with directions for my funeral. Now, my dear sir," seeing me deeply af-

fected, "we will banish this gloomy subject, and speak upon more cheerful topics."

She then instantly changed the conversation, if such it could be termed, for I had felt quite unequal to taking a part in it, and proceeded to give her opinion with an elegance of diction, fluency of speech, and clearness of judgment, such as I have seldom met with, upon some new and popular works which she had been occupied in reading; but the extreme brilliance of her eye, and flush of her before pale cheek was to me more alarming than the languid air with which she had first addressed me.

I was seated with Mrs. Seymour a few evenings after this, together with Mr. Morley, who had been reading prayers to her, as he frequently did, when I beheld her countenance suddenly change, and heaving one short convulsive sigh, the vital spark, which had inhabited her pure bosom, took its flight towards its kindred angels without a struggle. Her death was, indeed, an enviable one; the sweet smile which still hovered around her mouth, and the serenity which was spread over her alabaster forehead, led one to believe that the change from mortality to im-

mortality was in her, not only unaccompanied by pain, but almost one of pleasure and delight.

We had long been prepared for this melancholy event. The poor orphan, who was seated at her feet when she expired, was alone unable to comprehend the scene before him. When he gazed on that lovely face which had hitherto invariably answered him with a look of the tenderest affection, and beheld only the marble stillness of death—when he felt the chill of that hand which a short hour before had so ardently clasped his—then only did he believe her to be dead, when throwing himself upon her, he besought her to live again, or take him with her.

I judged it best to let the first ebullition of grief pass ere I removed him. At length, I prevailed upon him to accompany me to another room, when he soon sobbed himself to sleep in my arms, and thus in temporary forgetfulness of his irreparable loss, he passed the night.

I thought it right to take up my abode at the cottage, until the last testimonial of respect was paid to the memory of its departed mistress.

On opening Mrs. Seymour's bureau on the day following her decease, which I did in presence of Mr. Morley, I perceived a slip of paper, containing directions for her funeral, and a request that her remains might be interred in one corner of the churchyard, under the shade of a large weeping willow.

I likewise found, as she had told me I should, a packet directed to myself, and her will, together with numerous packages of letters, all regularly placed, and ticketed on the outside with the date and name of the writer.

Every thing was arranged in the most exact and methodical manner, and every direction was given that could possibly be required. Her funeral was ordered to be as private and unpretending as if it were the funeral of a farmer's daughter. Her body was to be conveyed to the grave by eight old men, and attended by the same number of old women, each of whom was to have a suit of black. One week after her decease, the interment took place of this unfortunate and beautiful young woman! I attended as chief mourner, accompanied by her weeping child; whilst Mr. Morley, in faltering

accents, read the impressive service, and consigned the remains of her whom he had so much admired to an early tomb. She was followed to her last home by nearly all the inhabitants of the parish; for by the farmers and their wives she was respected, whilst by the poorer class, to whom she had been a generous benefactress, she was almost idolized.

Immediately after the funeral, Mr. Morley and I, calling Mrs. Seymour's old servant into the room, read the will; which, to my surprise, I perceived was stated to be that of "Emily Benfield (commonly called Seymour), widow of the Hon. Horace Benfield;" in which she bequeathed one hundred pounds to Mr. Morley, some valuable books to myself, some plate and ornaments to two friends in Switzerland, her wardrobe and a hundred pounds to her old servant, and the rest of her property to her child; appointing me sole guardian to the poor orphan.

Upon reading the will, I recalled to my mind having heard a few years before, that Lord Benfield's eldest son was dead, and was reported to have seduced a young lady of fortune and family a year or two prior to his decease: but,

as I was at that time on the eve of my departure to the continent, I heard no more on the subject, nor did I again think of it, until the present circumstance brought it to my remembrance. I did not open the packet directed to me until alone, when, on taking off the envelope, I perceived a letter addressed to myself, with numerous other letters and papers, a marriage register, and a large roll of manuscript. On opening the letter, I read as follows:

"The greatest part of the narrative which accompanies this has been written during hours of solitude and suffering, without knowing to whom I could consign papers so important to the future wellbeing of my darling child. In the honour, integrity, and affection of Mr. Morley, I knew I could confide; but his simplicity of character, and ignorance of the world, render him very unequal to contending with the deep, designing, vindictive spirits, likely to be opposed to him. But when Colonel Thornville visited this tranquil abode, and I found upon inquiry that it was the same Colonel Thornville of whom I had formerly heard my

parents speak with respect and admiration, I devoutly thanked the Almighty for having brought him here at such a period. Philosophers may call it folly—madness—or what they will—but I must ever look upon it as a special act of that kind Providence which never deserts the widow or the orphan; that the being above all others fitted for such an undertaking, should not only have visited this sequestered spot, but have been detained here by a slight accident, until he became warmly attached to that child whom he has sworn to protect, and to whose care I most confidently resign him. For, with talents acknowledged by all who know him, liberality of spirit almost unequalled, wealth which no one has a right to claim, a kindliness of heart which causes him to spend a great part of his life in searching out objects of charity, and an independence of mind which looks with equal contempt upon the lordly reprobate and the low-born ruffian—where could I find a man so calculated to protect my child? Nowhere. Convinced of this, I leave him in *your* hands; and on my knees, humbly pray that you, who have caused the mourning widow to resign her-

self cheerfully to that awful fiat, which separates her from her beloved child, and consigns her to an early tomb, may hereafter have your own pillow smoothed by the dear little hands you now so tenderly clasp, and that you may be repaid a thousandfold by the gratitude and affection of my Horace, for the gleam of happiness which you have shed around the last hours of his mother, EMILY BENFIELD."

I could not read such a letter, and at such a moment, without feeling deeply affected. Poor thing! she had been so ill used by others, that she knew not how to be sufficiently grateful to the few who treated her with kindness. I did not deserve the high encomiums she passed upon me, but I determined to do my duty to her child, and I trust I have never swerved from it. I could not gain resolution to open her narrative until the next morning, when I read as follows:

"My earliest years were passed in the beautiful vale of Benfield, in Cheshire. My father had a handsome private fortune, independent of

the rectory of Benfield, of which he was the incumbent, and which was worth about a thousand pounds per annum. He and my mother were, as may be supposed, most fondly attached to me, for I was their only child. Two sons were born before myself, but both died in infancy. My life passed in such tranquil happiness, that for the first eleven years I recollect nothing in it to mark the progress of time. I was equally the pupil of both my parents; for whilst my father taught me languages, and all those branches of education in which it was in his power to instruct me, my mother taught me all the little arts and accomplishments so necessary for a female to know.

"About this time my mother was led to expect an addition to her family, which, as I was her last child, she had not anticipated; and her health becoming extremely delicate, she was unable to pay that attention to my improvement which my age required. My father had an insuperable objection to a governess, and my mother, knowing how strong his prejudices were on that subject, did not attempt to oppose them. It was therefore decided that I should be sent

to school. Dearly as I loved my kind and indulgent parents, the idea of going where I should have young companions, reconciled me to leaving home; but so anxious were my father and mother that the school which they should select might be in every respect eligible, that I began to doubt whether I should ever really be sent from home.

"At length, after having made every possible inquiry, a seminary as perfectly unexceptionable as any merely human establishment could be, was heard of, and proved all that my parents had been led to expect. My father accompanied me there forthwith. I never can forget what we both suffered when we parted; it was our first separation, and he scarcely had resolution to leave me. I had not been permitted to see my mother the morning of my departure, that she might be spared the pain of saying farewell.

"Mrs. Edmonds, with whom I was placed, was as nearly perfect as any one could be; and her pupils, twelve in number, were like a well-regulated private family. She was a woman of very superior talents, highly cultivated mind, and elegant manners; to which she added, a

heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. By her pupils she was equally loved and reverenced; no temper, however stubborn, could withstand her kindness. Under her judicious management, even an amiable disposition improved; whilst an unamiable one remained so no longer. In her little establishment, religion and morality went hand in hand with the graces! Never did an individual leave her without being benefited by her care, beyond even what they themselves were aware of; for so gently, and so judiciously, did she correct them, that failings frequently disappeared without leaving even a trace behind. Bear with me, whoever ye are that read these pages, whilst I pay this tribute to the memory of my revered preceptress!

"Under such tuition, it is scarcely necessary to say, that I improved even more than my parents could have expected. When I returned home on the first vacation, they were much gratified by my general improvement; for my manners before I left home had acquired some degree of formality, owing to having been accustomed to associate with those only who were

so much older than myself. My spirits had, likewise, from being with young companions, become more buoyant and sprightly.

"I had, on my return to Benfield, a great pleasure, in addition to those I had before enjoyed there, in nursing a little brother; my mother having been confined during my absence. From this period nothing occurred of any moment for the next four years, at which time the ruthless hand of death seized upon the lovely blossom of which we were all so proud, as it had before done upon those children born prior to myself. My parents were severely tried by this affliction; but, accustomed to bow submissively to the divine will, though they deeply lamented their loss, they murmured not. I was sent for, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that my presence was of essential service to my dear mother. Much as my parents wished for my society at home, since they thought it advantageous to me to remain two years longer with Mrs. Edmonds, they would not detain me with them. It was not without a painful effort, that they could again part with their now only child, but for my advantage they were willing to

submit to any privation. At the expiration of my eighteenth year I returned to Benfield, no more to quit it, and was welcomed with rapturous affection to my home.

"A few weeks after my return, we were surprised by information from the steward, that Lord Benfield, to whom the whole of the surrounding property belonged, was, with his lady and family, coming to the Park to remain some months, and had given orders that the house should, without delay, be made as comfortable as possible.

"Benfield Park was a fine property and beautifully situated, but the house, which was an Elizabethan one, had been suffered to go to decay, if such a term may be used, when the roof and walls were duly repaired, and the windows glazed. No new furniture had decorated it for upwards of fifty years, and great part of what was there was more than a century and a half old! An old servant with his wife and daughter, lived in the house, and, during winter, kept fires in the numerous apartments; but they had at all times a damp and cheerless appearance, which, when Lord Benfield took his

bride to visit his different seats (about two-and-twenty years prior to the period of which I write), disgusted her so much, that she had never again returned to this, the oldest of his family domains, and what could now induce her to choose it as a temporary residence, we could not surmise. Occasionally, during my childhood, Lord Benfield had come for a few days, at which times he made the rectory his home. Had he been coming alone, we should not have been surprised, but that the gay and fashionable viscountess should choose to spend a summer there, no one could have imagined. All now became bustle and animation. Carpenters, painters, and paperers, were at work in all directions; then followed upholsterers and cabinet-makers, &c.; and, although the steward's means were very limited, so well did he arrange every thing, that before the family arrived, the house looked cheerful and comfortable. The removal of the damp and torn tapestry, and substitution of neat papers and paint, though not in unison with the style of the house, made it a much more desirable abode. He likewise removed the moth-eaten curtains and chairs to

the servants' apartments, substituting others of a less magnificent, but more commodious description. A few thousand pounds, expended with judgment, would have made Benfield Park one of the finest places of the kind in England; but since he had not as many hundreds, much as I lamented to see the old tapestry torn down, and velvet state bed, with its nodding plumes, removed, I could not but admit that Mr. Marten had made the house much more habitable than before.

"My mother appeared somewhat distressed by the expected arrival of Lord and Lady Benfield; I vainly requested to know the cause of her evident agitation, as she always replied that I only fancied it, or she had a headach, or something which seemed to me to be far from the real cause. My father, neither elated nor depressed, pursued the even tenour of his way, without seeming deeply interested in what interested all others so much.

"At length the day arrived which brought the noble Lord and his Lady to their oldest family seat. They were met by a number of the parishioners, who, taking the horses out of

the carriage, drew it in triumph to the house. As it passed the Rectory, my father advanced and shook hands with those in the carriage, when it again proceeded, whilst the bells rung, and the children huzza'd, and all seemed joy and gladness. As I stood at the window, my heart beating joyfully at the gay scene, which was heightened by the sun shining brightly upon the crowd before me, I heard a low sob, and, turning round, beheld my beloved mother in tears. I flew to her—she strained me in her arms, then gently kissing me, and begging me not to notice what I had seen, as she would soon be better, she left the room. My feelings were instantaneously chilled and depressed, I sat down to reflect upon my mother's evident distress, for which I was totally unable to assign a cause. Could it be a presentiment of evil which thus affected her? I had heard and read of such things, but I understood them not; and after reflecting long and vainly on the subject, I endeavoured to dismiss it from my mind. In the evening a note was brought from Lady Benfield, requesting that we would dine at the park on the following day. New as the world

was to me, I was naturally delighted at the idea of going there; but when, on turning towards my mother, I beheld her quivering lip and downcast eye, a revulsion took place in my feelings, and before any one could speak, I said,

"'My mother is not well; perhaps you can apologize for us, sir?'

"She smiled approvingly, but said,

"'No, my Emily, to-morrow we must all dine there; it is proper we should do so; and as my indisposition is only trivial, it need not prevent us—indeed, I shall be glad to have an opportunity of taking you a little more into society now.'

"My father agreeing in the propriety of our accepting Lady Benfield's invitation, if my mother were well enough to venture out, an answer was sent to that effect. Since our visit was determined upon, with the versatility of youth I thought only of the pleasure attending it.

"My father was, at this time, a strikingly handsome man; his finely-formed features were rendered doubly attractive by their intellectual expression, and his brilliant and almost jet-black eyes seemed as if they could have pene-

trated through the closest disguise; but tempered as they were by the mildness of his manner, the sweet smile which played around his mouth, and the melody of his voice, one might venture to encounter that glance, which otherwise would have made the beholder quail. My mother, fair and fragile, looked as if too nearly approximating that heaven which seemed to be her native sphere; for her gentle spirit and frame appeared equally unable to cope with the ills of life, though like the willow she bowed so meekly to them, that she sometimes escaped unscathed by the tempestuous gale, which, for the time, had laid her low. She was at this period so lovely, that by the village children, she was known by the name of 'the pretty lady;' but, alas! the seeds of consumption were even then sown in her constitution, though I knew it not. As it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to describe oneself, I will not attempt it, but enclose a miniature, which was taken a few months afterwards, and considered a striking likeness; to which I must add, that I was considered strongly to resemble both my parents, but more particularly my father."

Then laying down the manuscript (said Colonel Thornville), I unclasped a miniature-case, which was enclosed with the papers. It was the likeness of a very lovely female, about eighteen years of age; the features were those of the deceased lady, but there was in the countenance an expression so totally different, that it was scarcely possible to conceive that it could have been intended for the same person. There was a peculiar expression of happiness—of *enjouement*—the coral lips just opening, as if on the point of saying some goodhumoured pleasantry, whilst the bright *riant* eye and intellectual forehead, all partook of the same happy character. The beautifully-rounded arm, and small white hand, were raised to confine a scarf, which the wind appeared blowing off her shoulders, the same envious element causing her flowing tresses to leave her blooming cheeks and fair throat quite uncovered. It was in truth a picture to gaze upon with delight. How changed was the original when I first beheld her!—She was still exquisitely lovely, but it was loveliness of so melancholy a character, as made one's heart ache to look upon it,

Poor young creature (said I, wiping away a starting tear), you must have suffered much to change the character of your beauty so entirely, and in so short a period!

Where (I inwardly continued, shuddering as my thoughts reverted to that grave, in which I had seen her remains deposited the preceding day), where is now that symmetrical form, and lovely face? that mind so pure, so gentle? It is true, the casket in which the precious gem of thy immortal soul was placed, is hastening to decay, but the jewel it contained, now shines with more resplendence than mortal can depict. My feelings were too highly wrought to admit of my reading more of the narrative at that time; I therefore replaced it in the envelope, and endeavoured to strengthen my nerves, by going into the open air.

Having regained composure of spirits, by spending an hour in the fresh air, I returned to the perusal of the manuscript (continued Colonel Thornville), and read as follows:

"According to our engagement, we proceeded the following day to Benfield Park to

dinner, my father having paid his respects there in the morning. We were received with pompous politeness by Lord Benfield, whom I had not seen since my childhood. At this time he appeared about seventy years of age; he was tall and gentlemanly, but without any striking peculiarity of either manner or appearance. Not so the young man whom he introduced as his eldest son, Horace, who was certainly the most elegant-looking person I had ever beheld. Scarcely had we exchanged salutations, ere a door at the opposite end of the room was thrown open, and a lady advanced, resembling nothing I had before seen, or of which I had formed a conception. Her beauty was of such resplendence as I had sometimes read of, but had hitherto looked upon only as the coinage of a poet's brain; it was set off by all the adventitious aid of fashionable and becoming costume. She advanced towards my father and mother with graceful kindness, expressing herself highly gratified at seeing the latter, after so long an interval. On being introduced to me, she exclaimed, 'Is this lovely girl really your daughter? Is it possible that this can be the

beautiful child, of whom Lord Benfield used to speak? Ah, my friend,' turning towards my father, 'how these young people remind us of our own advancing age!'

"'Were it not for such remembrances,' said my father, 'we should not think it possible for your ladyship to have seen many summers, since you last visited Benfield.'

"'And yet,' continued she, 'it is twenty-two years since I was here, and, if I mistake not, it is half that number since you were in town: but this must not again be the case; since these scions will spring up, we must not hide them in retirement. Frederick,' turning towards a pale, supercilious-looking youth, who had entered the room with her, 'I must have the pleasure of introducing you to the daughter of two of my earliest friends; but you must guard your heart, for beauty like hers, is not to be seen "amid woods and glens, and shady bowers," with impunity.'

"The gentleman thus introduced, who proved to be her ladyship's youngest son, answered only by a bow, whilst a half scornful smile wreathed around his thin lips. Somewhat dis-

concerted by Lady Benfield's praise, although uttered in so playful a manner that it was impossible to take offence, I was happy to escape towards an open window, whence I obtained a magnificent view of the surrounding country, where Mr. Benfield immediately followed me, and we entered into an animated conversation.

"The day passed to me most delightfully, for Lady Benfield's bland and winning manners, aided by her extreme beauty and elegance, gained my warmest admiration. She saw the impression she had made, and besought my mother to allow me to remain at the park for some days. This she at first refused, under the plea of my not being prepared to stay from home; but her ladyship so quickly set aside that objection, that my mother at length declared she would leave the decision of the case to my father, who immediately transferred it to me.

"Although I was aware that my dear mother was not well, and I had seen that she was not in her usual spirits; as, likewise, that in consenting to my stay, it was in compliance

with the urgent entreaties of Lady Benfield, rather than her own wish, I had not resolution to withstand the repeated request of our kind friends, and above all, my own wishes. It was the first offence of the kind I had ever committed, and even at the time, my heart reprimanded me for the selfishness of my conduct. It was soon arranged that my maid should be sent from the rectory with my wardrobe, and that I should remain at the park for a few days. When I took leave of my mother, as she imprinted a kiss upon my cheek, and whispered, 'God bless you! my child,' her kindness seemed to reproach me, for having consented to remain with Lady Benfield, more than words could have done; I would then gladly have retracted my consent, but it was too late.

"Not to dwell too minutely on this period of my life, I will only say that weeks rolled rapidly away, in the delightful society at Benfield Park, where I spent the greatest part of my time, with the consent and approbation of my indulgent parents, utterly forgetful that I ever had reason to suppose that my mother did

not entirely participate in my enjoyment. My father, from holding the situation of chaplain to his lordship, thought it right to dine with him more frequently than he would have otherwise wished; and my mother, on my account, accompanied him generally two or three days in each week; but I had an apartment there, and was equally at home as if at the rectory.

"Lady Benfield more nearly resembled some fabled enchantress, than any thing of which I had formed an idea. Her incantations were a brilliant wit, a peculiarly seductive manner, a voice soft and harmonious as a seraph's song, attended by high fashion, elegance, and, above all, a fascinating flattery, so delicate as to be quite invisible to those whom she wished to please. Her magical wand was her own beautiful and love-inspiring person, which drew a charmed circle around her! That a being so gifted, should obtain the unbounded love and admiration of a young creature like myself, only just emerged from school, is not to be wondered a.

"But Benfield Park contained another inmate,



who soon became more dear to me even than its fascinating mistress—this was her eldest son, Horace! Lady Benfield rarely left her room until two o'clock, therefore when I staid with her, unless there were any ladies with whom she particularly wished me to remain, I each morning walked to the rectory, where Horace usually accompanied me; thus we associated together more than other inmates of the house (for even if I walked home alone at any time, I was almost sure of meeting him on my return), and he was so great a favourite with both my parents, that he never was an unwelcome visiter to them.

"When much company was at the park, with whom (as being more at home there than themselves) it was desirable to remain, Horace devoted himself to reading, riding, driving, or walking with us; thus rendering, what would otherwise have been irksome to me, some of the most agreeable hours of my life.

"My mother appeared restored to her usual health, and calm, even state of spirits. She expressed herself much gratified that I had an

opportunity of enjoying that gaiety and cheerful society, so agreeable at my age; whilst the elegance of Lady Benfield's manners, would, she said, contribute towards giving that polish to my own, which the retirement of our neighbourhood, made it difficult to obtain in society. I thought I could not copy a more desirable manner than that of my own dear mother, though Lady Benfield's was no doubt more highly fashioned and seductive.

"Although time fled thus rapidly and delightfully, I did not find all the inmates of Benfield equally pleasing. There was one person whom, at that early period, I looked upon with instinctive aversion—this was Mr. Frederick Benfield, who, arrogant, haughty, and satirical, looked with contempt upon all whom he considered as not belonging to the aristocracy of the land, amongst whom he alone reckoned the families of the nobility. To me individually, he was attentive, far beyond my wish; but to my parents, and the neighbouring gentry, he was rudely supercilious, or at the best, coldly and haughtily polite. As his at-

tentions to me increased, my dislike to him did the same, until I fear there were times when my manner towards him approached nearly to his own disdainful one towards others.

" Upon one occasion, when I declined some civility from Mr. Frederick Benfield, he said, ' You would not thus receive my *elder* brother's proffered attentions, Miss Seymour.'

" As he spoke, the strong emphasis placed on the word elder, which grated harshly on my ear, seemed to say, ' were he not my elder brother, you would not prefer his society to mine;' my blood rushed to my cheeks, and I indignantly replied, ' Mr. Benfield never assumes a superiority over those whom he honours with his friendship—he never endeavours to make those whom he associates with, feel their inferiority of rank—consequently, one who, like myself, has no claim to rank, beyond that of a private gentlewoman, must ever feel more at ease in the company of Mr. Benfield, than of one who never forgets that he is a viscount's son.'

" ' Surely, Miss Seymour,' replied he, with considerable irritation of manner, ' I have ever treated *you* with respect and attention?'

" 'Individually, I have nothing to complain of; but I see your conduct to, and hear the opinions you express of others, too frequently, to have any wish for the honour of your attentions.'

" 'I think, Miss Seymour, the exception I make in *your* favour, ought to raise me in your estimation, and give me some claim to your gratitude.'

" 'Gratitude!' I replied, with something ironical in my manner, 'I fear I do not feel grateful to the extent I ought, for the honour you do me, but,' courtesying very low, 'I will endeavour to school myself into proper respect, ere we again meet.' And before he could prevent it, I left the room.

" But far from putting a stop to his unpleasant attentions, the more I expressed my annoyance at them, the greater they became. 'If,' said he, 'I could win from you one of those sweet smiles and approving looks, which are bestowed so frequently upon my more fortunate brother, you would find me gentle and tender as himself.'

" As he thus spoke, he fixed his eyes upon

me in so presuming, yet sinister a way, as to cause me to turn from him in anger. In consequence of the malicious insinuations of Frederick Benfield, I determined to avoid walking with his brother, which I contrived to do during several days, although not without some difficulty. I observed that the latter was more grave and silent than usual, and regretted having been obliged to adopt a behaviour, which appeared to give him pain; yet I knew no other means of putting a stop to the severe remarks of Frederick.

"At length, on walking towards the rectory one morning, I met Horace, who, joining me, inquired if he had been so unfortunate as to offend me. I answered him, with some confusion, in the negative.

"'Why, then,' said he, 'have you so studiously avoided me, during many days? I have in vain sought you in your usual haunts; neither in the park, garden, nor drawing-room, have I been able to see you, unless surrounded by company; and this morning when I requested leave to accompany you, you refused my at-

tendance, whilst a few minutes afterwards I saw Frederick walking with you. Do not, dearest Miss Seymour, suppose me so selfish as to wish to engross more of your time than is agreeable to yourself; but you have, until lately, so kindly allowed me to attend upon you occasionally, that I feel your present coldness more severely. If I have offended, I entreat you to say in what manner, that I may do so no more; for not for worlds would I give you the slightest uneasiness, or cause you a moment's displeasure.'

"'Indeed,' I replied, in some agitation, 'you have not displeased me—you could not offend me, since I know nothing which you have said or done to have that effect.'

"'Then why so entirely deprive me of the pleasure of accompanying you in your walks?'

"I blushed—made an effort to speak—hesitated—then began an excuse, but stopped, utterly at a loss what reason to assign, since I could not name Frederick's insinuations relative to himself as the cause. I know not how it was, but although I was unable to give the explanation required, I soon found myself walk-

ing as formerly, my arm within Horace's, towards the rectory. From this period we seemed to understand each other's feelings more fully than heretofore; and in the enjoyment of society so congenial to my wishes, I forgot that I had ever thought it necessary to avoid him. Not long after this, Horace and I were walking together on the terrace in front of the house, waiting for the rest of the breakfast-party to assemble, as there were several visiters then at the park, when Frederick passed us, making as he did so, a low but angry bow to myself, whilst on his brother he cast a glance of mingled hatred and scorn. I looked at Horace, and saw the crimson mantling on his cheek, whilst, contracting his fine forehead, he returned his brother's glance with one of contempt.

"With an involuntary tremour, I grasped Horace's arm, who instantly exclaimed, 'Emily—Miss Seymour!—are you unwell?—you tremble!—I beseech you, speak—tell me you are not ill.'

"'No, no,' gasping, I replied, 'not ill—only alarmed; your brother—I fear—'

"'What do you fear?—what of my brother? Frederick has not dared to offend or alarm you, surely?—if he has'—and again a fearful glance shot from his eyes—'he must and shall answer to me for it.'

"'Oh, no—he has not offended me; but I observed you exchange such angry looks when you passed each other, as to make me fear that I may be the unintentional cause of a misunderstanding between you, from having avoided walking with him several times, when he has expressed a wish to accompany me.'

"'Let not that give you one moment's uneasiness; Frederick and myself have never lived together upon those terms of affection and confidence which is desirable between brothers, and as we become older, we are not likely to be less estranged; since those traits of character, in which even in infancy we differed, increase with our growth—and would, without other cause, be sufficient to occasion that coolness which you observe.'

"'It is not your coolness I fear,' said I, half smiling.

"'No,' replied he, 'you fear my warmth;

but Frederick is not warm, he is cool in temper, and—but I wish not to forget that he is my brother, nor to say any thing that may prejudice you against him; perhaps, had not my mother evinced so strong a partiality for him, it might have been better for us both; but Frederick has been idolized from his birth—his faults have been unchecked, whilst I—but'—again interrupting himself, and repressing a rising tear—'I will say no more, for by her just estimation of you, Miss Seymour, Lady Benfield has more than compensated for any deficiency of maternal tenderness which I may have known or fancied.'

"'Surely,' exclaimed I, 'it is not possible that one so amiable—so affectionate—so every way admirable as Lady Benfield, could have been deficient in kindness to her child; and, above all, to such a son as you must ever have been!'

"As I spoke, Horace's countenance lighted up with renewed animation, and a smile played around his beautiful mouth.

"'Think no more, dearest Miss Seymour, of what in a moment of irritation I have suffered

to escape—I believe I am too sensitive, and sometimes fancy I see unkindness where none was intended. I am now no longer under the dominion of a morbid fancy, but fully alive to the happiness of which I am at present in the enjoyment.'

"As it yet wanted a considerable time to the hour of breakfast, we extended our walk to some distance: ere our return, Horace had declared his love, and obtained from me an admission that it was not unacceptable! He informed me, that during his father's life, he had nothing whatever independent of him; but that it had been long arranged that, on his coming of age the following summer, he should join his lordship in cutting off the entail of part of the family property, to enable him to free himself from his pecuniary embarrassments; whilst, in return, he was to be put in immediate possession of independence: until which time, Horace said, he could not with propriety apply to my father for his consent, with any reasonable hope of obtaining it; he therefore would not ask me to promise at any future period to become his—all he would venture to request being, that I

would bear in my remembrance that he was entirely and for ever devoted to me. Knowing him to be the most disinterested and honourable of human beings, I assented to his wish, that his attachment to me should not be made known to my parents until he was of age.

"As I entered not into a positive engagement, I flattered myself I was guilty of no dereliction of duty by concealing what had taken place. To this fatal concealment the misery of my life has been in a great degree owing. Horace, noble-minded and generous, could not bear to apply to my father until he had the power of making such pecuniary proposals as might be suitable to his rank and my own; yet, loving ardently, he had, in a moment of excitement, suffered his feelings to hurry him into an avowal of attachment long before the intended period! I was not long alone ere I perceived in its fullest force the impropriety of my conduct, in having assented to the concealment Horace had wished; when with him, I thought that, since I had entered into no positive engagement, I should not be reprehensible in acceding to his request; but when no longer listening to his loved voice,

such sophistry ceased its empire over my better reason.

"When I again saw Horace alone, and heard him entreat that I would not hint to my father and mother what had passed, far from acting up to what I had intended, I only reiterated the promise of secrecy I had before given. Where was my affection for the best and most indulgent of parents?—where my duty and obedience?—where my self-approbation? All—all absorbed in one overwhelming passion! Oh! how rapidly—how delightfully did those hours fly, in which we associated together! Whether we walked—rode—read—or in whatever way we spent our time, all was alike delightful, for mutual love threw its halo around us!

"My mother now expressed a wish that I should be less at Benfield Park than I had lately been; but her ladyship so earnestly besought her to suffer me to remain there, that she assented for a short time longer, as she not only saw me daily; but from my father being so much there, I was, she considered, under his care. At length, however, I quitted my kind friends, and returned to my affectionate mother.

I had not been many days at home, when my father, on entering the room in which we were seated, observed that Lord Benfield had just left him.

"'Has he?' said my mother.

"'Yes; and I think you will be as much surprised when you learn the cause of his visit as I have been. To you, Emily,' turning towards me, 'it will be no surprise; but I could have wished you to have given your mother and myself some intimation of what was in agitation; since, as it was, I was so totally unprepared for Lord Benfield's communication, that I imagine he must have thought I received it in a very unsatisfactory manner.

"Unable to conjecture to what my father alluded, I looked at him with surprise, when my mother said, 'Pray, my love, keep us in suspense no longer; what did Lord Benfield want?'

"'He wishes to deprive us of our greatest treasure: he has been here to make proposals in his son's name for Emily. I could have wished it otherwise; but since I understand it

to be their mutual desire, I have given a conditional consent—that is, in case you should,' addressing me, 'remain attached to each other, and wish for an union at the termination of two years from this period; as I consider that neither of you have yet attained an age, or seen sufficient of the world to enter into an engagement.'

"As my father spoke, the blood rushed to my cheeks, forehead, and neck—I felt overwhelmed with confusion and amazement. That Lord Benfield should apply to him on such a subject, without my having received the slightest intimation respecting it from Horace, amazed me. As I remained silent my father continued, 'Although not nearly allied to nobility, your connexions are unexceptionable—your fortune will be a very fine one, and you, my child,' my dear father's voice faltered as he spoke, 'are in yourself a treasure which any man might be proud to own. With such advantages you might have chosen better in every point of view, I think—and perhaps when your judgment is improved by further knowledge of the world,

you may be of my opinion; but should your inclination still point towards Frederick Benfield——'

"'Frederick Benfield!' exclaimed I, in utter astonishment, 'did you say Frederck Benfield?'

"'Yes, certainly, of whom else should I speak?'

"'I thought—I supposed—' then bursting into tears I could say no more.

"My mother, seeing me so much agitated, begged me to retire; but I felt that I must now make an exertion, for if such a mistake as the belief that I approved of Frederick should remain uncontradicted, for even a very short period, it was impossible to surmise the evil consequences that might ensue. I therefore assured my father that it was an entire misapprehension, as I had never by word or deed given him the slightest encouragement; nor had his attentions been such as to give me reason to suppose he had any intention of proposing to me.'

"'Why then,' said my father, 'did you not at once say so? Lord Benfield assured me that his son had every reason to believe himself

approved by you, and you expressed no objection on my first naming the subject. I trust my daughter has not been playing the coquette, and giving encouragement to hopes which she never meant to realize?'

"'No, dearest father,' I replied, 'so far from it that I have with difficulty suppressed my dislike sufficiently to behave with any degree of civility to him; and even now I can scarcely believe his proposal made with any other view than that of annoying me, and—and—'

"I stopped, for I was on the point of saying, placing obstacles in his brother's way; but recollecting myself, I only added, 'indeed he is my utter aversion.'

"'That,' said my father, 'is a strong term to apply to a man who has chosen you from the rest of your sex, to be the companion of his future life; such a distinction merits your gratitude at least—more I do not wish you to feel—for Frederick Benfield is not a man whom I should approve of as my son-in-law. You authorize me then, Emily, to refuse his addresses positively and for ever?'

"'*Positively* and *for ever*, dearest father.'

"Oh, that my parents had then questioned me as to the state of my affections! Although I could not, without violating my word, have named our mutual attachment, I should have acknowledged my preference for Horace; and such a confession on my part must have led to a knowledge of all that had occurred, and I should most likely have been spared years of misery!

"But no questions were asked, and I retired to my apartment overpowered with agitation, which my parents considered the natural consequence of having had to give a refusal for the first time.

"Lord Benfield was much displeased on hearing from my father that I positively rejected his son's suit; and in consequence hastened his departure from the park, which was not to have taken place for several weeks. Lady Benfield called upon us prior to her departure; her manner, although graver than usual, was still kind and affectionate, and as she bade me adieu, she whispered in my ear, 'Though you have disappointed me by refusing to become my daughter, I still love you as if you were

such, and trust you will often write to me, and fulfil the hope you and your father have given me, that I shall see you in town ere long.'

"It was a great relief to my feelings to part with Lady Benfield upon such friendly terms, for knowing her extreme love for Frederick, I was apprehensive that I should by my refusal of his addresses, lôse her friendship for ever; which, so sincere was my affection for her, would have grieved me deeply.

"The neighbourhood was soon restored to that quiet state in which it had been prior to the arrival of its late gay visiters. The Benfield family became a theme of conversation at the dinner parties which next ensued. The beauty, fashion, elegance, and general captivation of manner which in her ladyship shone so pre-eminently—the pompous harangues of his lordship—the affability and amiable manners of their eldest son—with the arrogant and supercilious conduct of the youngest—equally became the subjects of admiration or satire. In a short time all interest in them seemed to subside, and their visit to the mansion of their forefathers was as if it had never been. New

themes of interest—new topics of conversation succeeded them. An expected marriage—a death—the arrival of one country neighbour from a distant journey—or the departure of another—any of these seemed sufficiently important to chase the noble family, who had lately occupied so large a portion of their thoughts and conversation, from the minds of all around. On one heart alone had their *séjour* at the park made a deep and indelible impression!

"How frequently did I return to those walks, in which I had rambled with Horace, to reflect upon the conversations we had there held. For hours I have sat with my eyes fixed upon an aged and picturesque hawthorn, which we had often admired together.

"Horace had vainly expressed a desire that we should correspond—I had resolution to withstand not only his wishes, but my own, and he candidly acknowledged that I was right in so doing.

"The Christmas vacation at length arrived, and with it came Horace to the park, avowedly for the purpose of shooting, but in reality to see

me. My father, who was much attached to him, requested him to make the rectory his home; but, conscious that he was acting with some duplicity towards his hospitable friend, he would not consent to take up his abode there altogether; notwithstanding which, he spent as much of his time with us as he could, consistently with the ostensible motive of his being in the country. I scarcely need say, that five weeks thus passed delightfully.

"Prior to Horace's arrival, my health and spirits were both giving way under the weight of anxiety by which I was oppressed; but with him, my cheerfulness and bloom had returned. Might not this have opened the eyes of my parents? I have since thought that they might, perhaps, at that time, surmise the probability of an attachment subsisting between us, but that, from seeing no obstacle, they left it to our own hearts to decide.

"A few weeks after Horace's return to Oxford, my father found that his presence was required in town, and he determined that my mother and self should accompany him. I had never been in the metropolis, excepting for a

few days, although educated within eight miles of it, and I naturally looked forward with delight to seeing all that I had heard described by Lady Benfield in such fascinating colours. I should there behold my ever beloved Mrs. Edmonds, whom I almost looked upon as a second mother; Lady Benfield, and, above all, my own Horace. With such pleasures in prospect, my spirits rose to their highest state of exhilaration, and for a few days prior to our departure, I seemed almost to tread on air!

"Immediately on our arrival at the house which my father had taken in the most fashionable part of London, Lady Benfield visited us. She kindly urged us to make her house our home; but as my parents positively refused, she said,

"'Then you must consider it your second home. On you, Mr. Seymour, as Lord Benfield's chaplain, I place an embargo, and shall expect to see you daily at half after seven o'clock, when no more agreeable engagement offers, and the more frequently my sweet friend, Mrs. Seymour, and your fair daughter, accompany you, the more highly I shall be gratified; and if you

will allow me, in recollection of our old and tried friendship,' turning to my mother, 'to become joint chaperon with yourself, to our charming Emily, I shall be delighted to be so; you need not fear my prudence; the Viscountess Benfield, as you have I trust seen, is a very different person from the giddy, headstrong Maria Morris, who used to give you so much trouble.'

"My mother appeared deeply affected, and, taking Lady Benfield's hand between hers, and pressing it tenderly, said,

"'Thank you, dear Lady Benfield, I am far from strong, and can but seldom accompany Emily to such parties as I should wish her to attend; therefore, your office is most gratefully received.'

"Her ladyship then proposed that we should accompany her that evening to the Opera. My mother said, she had not yet recovered sufficiently from the fatigue of her journey to be of the party, but she urged my father and self to accept Lady Benfield's kind proposal, to which, with some persuasion, the former, on my account, acceded.

"To one so new to the world as myself, it may readily be supposed that my astonishment and admiration, on entering the Opera House, were excessive. The immense size of the building—the splendour of the decorations—the brilliant lights—the elegant dresses of those who filled the boxes, and the incessant buzz of voices combined to astonish and confuse me so much, that I was not aware that I had become a prominent figure on the scene. I was recalled to my recollection by hearing several voices exclaim, 'Who is she?'—'Who can it be?'—'It is Lady Benfield's box.' Accompanied by sundry expressions of admiration. No sooner did Lady Benfield's name catch my ear, than looking to that part of the pit whence it came, I found every eye fixed upon myself. I then became sensible of the impropriety of my situation, for I was standing in front of the box, with my head extended in an attitude of astonishment and admiration. I withdrew to the back of the box, covered with blushes, when I saw Lady Benfield conversing intently with a very fine-looking man, who had an air of high fashion, and whose eyes were earnestly fixed upon me.

Her ladyship instantly introduced him by the name of Sir Edward Hume.

"I had thought Lady Benfield most beautiful when in the country, but now that I beheld her in town, surrounded by brilliant lights, and with all the advantages of full dress, she shone more transcendently than ever, and far eclipsed all the most celebrated beauties of the court. I was, and indeed still am, an enthusiastic admirer of good music, I was therefore equally charmed with what I heard, and what I saw, and felt that I could never be sufficiently grateful to those who had procured me so delightful an evening. When the Opera concluded, Lady Benfield took my father and self home in her carriage, and then proceeded, escorted by Sir Edward, to sup at the Dowager Countess C——'s.

"The following evening, Lady Benfield introduced my parents and self at Lady Cardown's, having procured from her tickets for the splendid ball which she that evening gave. Never having before been at a party of the kind, I was amazed by the pressure of the gay throng, and the confused hum of human voices;

which, from being so totally unaccustomed to it, affected my head to such a degree, as to take from me all enjoyment of the brilliant scene during the first half-hour; after which period, I wound my way through the festive throng, with all the delight of a novice. I thought that Horace only was wanting to complete my happiness—the recollection of him alone, I believe, prevented my senses becoming giddy with the incense and flattery I received.

"Our group was indeed one of unequalled beauty. Of Lady Benfield's acknowledged and surpassing charms, I need not speak; my father was, as I have before observed, a strikingly handsome man—his beauty was of so manly, so majestic a character, that it could not be passed unnoticed; whilst my beloved mother was grace, sweetness, and simplicity personified—her figure was symmetry—her features were perfection—yet was her beauty of that delicate and fragile texture, which is more calculated for private life than public gaze; but it was beauty which, when once observed, was more certain to attract the admiration of the discerning few, than that which on a first glimpse might appear more

brilliant. I think the lustre of those around me must have shed some of its rays upon myself, for from that night I became 'the fashion' —'the rage.' That such a group, headed by a leader of *ton*, met with a favourable reception, was not surprising. Introductions crowded upon us. The following day the hall-table was literally filled with visiting-tickets; and ere we had been a week in town, we had received cards for every ball or large party in agitation, in the world of fashion in which we moved!

"Whilst partaking, with the pleasure natural to my age, of the gaiety by which I was surrounded, I could not but feel gratified by the attentions I received; at the same time that my affection for Horace preserved me from being altogether intoxicated by the flattery and adulation I met with: for not unfrequently, on my return from a scene of festivity, where I had appeared one of the principal objects of attraction, did I retire to my apartment under an impression, that the pleasures of which I had partaken would bear no comparison with the more tranquil happiness I had experienced at Benfield. Often at the most splendid parties was

I glad to escape from the compliments of those by whom I was surrounded, and to take shelter with my parents or Lady Benfield; on which occasions, I generally found Sir Edward Hume, who never danced, and who usually took his station near us, a most agreeable companion. He was sensible, well-informed, and pleasing in his appearance and manner; with sufficient of the satirist to render him very amusing, without giving me cause to apprehend that my own picture would be next on the canvass. He had, I was told, long been considered the cynosure of the gay world—his notice was alone sufficient to bring any one into fashion; and he had but to think of matrimony, and half the women in London would be at his command!

"Such was the account Lady Benfield gave of her friend, and, as far as I had an opportunity of judging, it appeared correct; since he no sooner entered a drawing-room, than an anxiety was shown to obtain his notice, by a thousand of those nameless modes of attracting attention, which some women condescend to practise towards a favoured individual. I enjoyed his society, because I feared no miscon-

struction of our familiarity, since he was, I knew, somewhat older than my father.

Under all the circumstances of my introduction into fashionable life, it will not appear very surprising that I received several eligible proposals. One only of the numerous aspirants for my hand, a baronet, with a pleasing person, agreeable manners, and large fortune, was particularly favoured by my parents; but finding that I expressed the same repugnance to the idea of an union with him, that I had before done towards others, he was at once dismissed; whilst my father said, with a smile, 'I perceive my Emily never means to leave her parents.'

"When by any accident Lady Benfield became aware of the dismissal of a suitor, she appeared much gratified, saying, that none of those who had addressed me were worthy of such a treasure! Indeed, her ladyship was never deficient in penetration when searching for failings, nor wit in placing in the most ludicrous point of view those of such persons as appeared wishful to obtain my approbation.

"Upon calling alone one day upon Lady Benfield, after we had been some time in town,

I found her seated with Sir Edward Hume, but rising soon after my entrance, and saying she must retire to answer a note, we were left together, when, to my equal surprise and concern, Sir Edward made an explicit avowal of attachment to me. In vain I assured him that I had not before the slightest idea of any such feeling on his part—he appeared quite incredulous; his attachment had, he said, been so evident to every one—he had even flattered himself that it met my approval, since I frequently turned from other admirers with apparent distaste, to converse with him. I admitted this to have been the case, at the same time that I said, the disparity in our ages had caused me to feel assured that the ease with which I conversed with him would not be misconstrued. Although I repeatedly told him that it was quite impossible I should ever think of him in any light beyond that of a friend, he said he should persist in urging me to become his, until assured of my attachment to some other person; and should trust, that when I knew him more thoroughly, I might be induced to give him hopes of ultimate success.

"Finding that nothing I could say would convince Sir Edward of the hopelessness of his suit, I arose to quit the room, when Lady Benfield at that moment entered from the adjoining one, and finding me resolved to depart, as my mother—whom I had left at the house of an invalid friend—would, I said, be waiting for me, immediately proposed accompanying me, saying her carriage should follow.

"When seated in the carriage, it required not so keen an observer as her ladyship to perceive that something unusual had occurred; as my flushed countenance and agitated manner could not remain unnoticed. She soon, therefore, drew from me what had passed—congratulated me on having obtained an admirer of whom any woman might be proud—and then gently and playfully chid me for receiving his proposal with so much coyness and affectation of indifference. In vain I assured her that my indifference was not assumed, and that I had not until that day an idea of his addressing me as a lover, or I should have acted very differently for some time past.

"She would not at first put any faith in my

assertions, saying, 'Why this concealment towards me, dearest Emily? I will not betray the little coquetry which we all on such occasions love to display, and for which the men like us the better; but to attempt to deceive me, your most attached friend, who with equal pride and pleasure have seen you attract the regard of one of the most elegant men in England, is really *de trop.*'

"I assured her ladyship, that she quite misunderstood my sentiments and feelings towards Sir Edward; for, though I liked him as an acquaintance, I never had given, and never could give him, the slightest encouragement in any more serious point of view.

"'Never give him the slightest encouragement, my dear Emily! It is too late now to say that, for you have already given him, not the slightest, but the greatest encouragement. Has he not attended you every where? Have you not sat out, dance after dance, whilst he has walked or conversed with you?—have not, during the last week or two, all your other friends made way for Sir Edward whenever he approached you? You have been given to him

by all the world, and of that world you are, in consequence of his admiration, the envy.'

"As I continued to disclaim any intention of encouraging the addresses of Sir Edward, Lady Benfield assailed me in every way that she could devise; my objections she laughed at, as childish and puerile, 'since with high talents, a fine person, elegant manners, and descended from an ancient family, he is in every point of view, a more eligible a match than many a lordling of the present day; added to which,' said she, 'the station he holds in the world of *ton*, will give any woman, whom he makes his wife, a high position in society; his age it would be absurd to make an objection, since he is barely in the prime of life.'

"At length, finding that neither reasoning nor ridicule had any effect upon my resolution, her ladyship had recourse to such auxiliaries, as it is probable only my prior attachment to her son could have enabled me to resist; for fixing her beautiful eyes, filled with tears, upon my face, and taking my hand affectionately, she supplicated me not to disappoint her fond hopes for my happiness, by my obduracy

towards a man, whom she should be proud to call the husband of her favourite friend.

"As I listened to her melodious voice attuned to the tenderest affection—as I felt the pressure of her hand—as I viewed her tearful eyes, I was so overpowered by my feelings, that bursting into tears, I besought her to urge me no further, since what she solicited was impossible.

"At that moment, the carriage stopped for my mother, and Lady Benfield quitting it to enter her own, which followed us, only whispered, 'You will not be so cruel as finally to disappoint my hopes, my sweet Emily.' My flushed cheek, and still tearful eyes, told my anxious mother that some painful circumstance had occurred. I soon explained all to that affectionate parent, who consoled me with the assurance, that my father would have no difficulty in convincing Sir Edward, should he apply for his approbation, of my having had no previous suspicion of his attachment.

"My parents were equally unprepared with myself for the *éclaircissement* which had taken place between Sir Edward Hume and me, and

when the baronet, in the course of that day, requested my father's assent to his addresses, as likewise his interest with his daughter, he was politely but decidedly informed, that there was not the most remote prospect of success. Sir Edward with reluctance assented to a final dismissal, but having at length declared that he not only resigned all hope, but would, since my father urged it, withdraw those attentions which might now become unpleasant to the object of them; he trusted, under these circumstances, we might meet as usual, and when in company appear—what he hoped we might still remain—friends. To this my father readily assented, and parted from Sir Edward, much gratified by the gentlemanly manner in which he received a refusal, which evidently mortified, not only his affection, but his pride.

" At this period, Horace and Frederick Benfield returned home for the Easter vacation. I need not state the pleasure with which the former and myself met, after a separation of nearly three months; and as Lady Benfield assured me that Frederick had requested her to say, that he was quite cured of his boyish fancy,

and begged that he might not be any interruption to the intercourse of the two families, we continued to meet as before their arrival.

"When Horace first returned to town, we acted with the greatest circumspection, not associating together more than might be expected in two young persons, whose families were upon intimate terms. But afterwards we became more heedless, and by dancing and conversing with each other more frequently than, in our peculiar circumstances, was prudent, drew upon ourselves the caustic remarks of Frederick! We flattered ourselves that our attachment would remain unsuspected, forgetting that nothing can elude the scrutinizing observation of lynx-eyed jealousy!

"Sir Edward, equally with Frederick, was occupied in watching the intercourse between Horace and myself, and, as I had afterwards reason to believe, was quite as anxious to prevent it: the latter being prompted by envy, ill-temper, jealousy, and disappointed passion; the former by a combination of almost equally powerful motives—love, pride, vanity, and self-interest, all of which would have been gratified

by an union with one so young, so much admired, and with such expectations as I possessed.

"Upon one occasion, being engaged to dine at Lord Benfield's, prior to going to the Opera, her ladyship said to my mother, almost immediately after our entrance, 'I hope to have the pleasure of introducing to you my son's affianced bride, we expect she will dine here to-day—at least her aunt, who, with herself, arrived last night in town, writes, that should her niece be sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of her journey, she will join our party.'

"'Do my ears deceive me?' I inwardly exclaimed, 'son's affianced bride! Yet one son is my betrothed husband, and the other, but a short time since, my rejected lover!'

"My mother having made a suitable reply to Lady Benfield, she proceeded thus: 'From various causes, Miss Jefferson and my son have seen less of each other for several years past, than was desirable; but the marriage will take place next summer, immediately upon his attaining his majority. They have been affianced from their birth, by their respective fathers,

as her broad lands and ingots of gold were thought a suitable exchange for the title of viscountess. Mr. Jefferson wished for rank, Lord Benfield required wealth, therefore the arrangement was soon made.'

"I at first thought Lady Benfield must be mistaken: it could not be Horace of whom she spoke; but, as she proceeded, a sickening apprehension came over me; my head became giddy, and ere she concluded, I sunk almost senseless, into the arms of Horace, who at that moment entered at the door near which I was standing. My unfortunate seizure caused universal confusion for a few moments; after which, by the application of *eau de Cologne,* and a determination to exert myself, I so far recovered, as to be enabled to remain in the room near an open window, having attributed my indisposition to heat.

"I had entirely recovered my self-possession, ere Mrs. and Miss Jefferson were announced. I recollected having occasionally heard the latter spoken of, as a friend of Lady Benfield's, who possessed almost unbounded wealth, but I had never until that day, heard the slightest

hint that she was likely to become her daughter-in-law.

"When the ladies entered the room, Lady Benfield received them with all that grace and courtesy of manner, which so peculiarly distinguished her; and his lordship, unbending from a certain degree of hauteur, which was usual with him, expressed great pleasure at seeing them so unexpectedly in town. Then calling Horace, who had withdrawn to a distant part of the room, but was now obliged, although with great apparent reluctance, to come forward, he said, 'I dare say Miss Jefferson and you will scarcely recognize in each other, the dear and intimate friends of former years; it is so long since you met, and,' with a slight hesitation, 'you are both so much improved; however, you now meet only to renew the affection of those times, I hope.'

"Horace bowed gravely, and stammered forth something of being happy to renew any of the friendships of his childhood; and then, for Miss Jefferson was still standing, begged to hand her to a seat, where he instantly left her.

"After conversing a little time with the

strangers, Lady Benfield crossed the room to inquire after me, when, hearing that I was much better, she said, in a low voice, to my mother, who was seated on the same couch with me, 'Miss Jefferson, we must admit, is very plain, but I believe extremely amiable, highly accomplished, and decidedly the mistress of almost countless wealth; in addition to which, the artless girl doats upon Horace, and as he *must* marry her, we endeavour to make as light of the attending *desagrémens* as possible.'

'If,' replied my mother, 'Mr. Benfield is really attached to Miss Jefferson, he will scarcely be aware she is plain, since a true affection throws its own lovely hue on the beloved object, thereby magnifying all that is most admirable, and casting a shadow upon such personal imperfections, as may be to others very evident; and I have too high an opinion of Mr. Benfield, to believe that he will marry any person, however great her wealth, unless he feels for her the strongest preference.'

"'Poor fellow!' returned her ladyship, half sighing, 'I fear there is on his part no very powerful *penchant*, which I deeply regret, as he

is so committed, that it is utterly impossible for him to escape this marriage.'

"Then again inquiring tenderly after my health, and affectionately pressing my hand, as she passed me, she quitted us, leaving a poisoned arrow to rankle in my breast. Never did a dinner appear more painfully long than the one to which I this day sat down. Lord Benfield had desired Horace to take Miss Jefferson to the eating room, and though he merely addressed her afterwards, when common politeness to a guest of his mother's demanded it, yet it seemed, to my prejudiced eye, more than was requisite.

"Absorbed in thought, I scarcely knew when I was addressed; fortunately my abstraction was attributed to indisposition, yet I was not so entirely lost to all that was passing around me, as not to observe Miss Jefferson's appearance and manner; neither of which were of a description to give any reasonable ground for jealousy. I had never seen so mean a looking person—her stature was extremely low, and she was somewhat deformed; her features, taken separately, were not remarkable, but as

a whole, they were particularly unpleasing; in the contraction of her forehead, and peculiar compression of her eyebrows, parsimony and narrowness of mind shone pre-eminently; whilst in her small keen black eyes, suspicion and envy were visible, as they glanced upon me, contrasted with the most evident, but not very delicate, admiration of Horace's fine face, whenever she could obtain an opportunity of gazing upon it. Her mouth would have been pretty rather than otherwise, had not its expression been that of scorn; her voice was unnaturally low and soft, but from the harsh guttural sound of an occasional word, it appeared to me evident that the latter was the tone in every day use, and that the gentle one, to which she now had recourse, was entirely affected. Her dress was costly in the extreme, and in the most extravagant height of the mode, which exposed her bony shoulders and dark shrivelled throat to all beholders! Such did the nabob's daughter appear to me at that moment. Whether this portrait was correct, or I only viewed her through a jaundiced

eye, will hereafter be seen. That Horace did not, could not, love such a person, I was confident, but that he was in some way involved with her, I greatly feared.

"Immediately after quitting the dining-room, I proposed to my mother to return home, as I did not feel equal to accompanying the party to the Opera. She readily assented to my wish, and Lady Benfield acknowledged she thought it prudent of me, after the little attack, from which I had suffered before dinner, to retire early to my repose. Telling my dear mother that a few hours' rest would quite restore me, I retired to my room, but not to sleep. Horace I felt had deceived me; he, whom I had believed one of the most ingenuous and most noble of human beings, had condescended to be guilty of artifice, to deceive an affectionate heart which confided in him! His engagement, then, with Miss Jefferson, was the cause of his wish to conceal his attachment to me from my parents! Bitter tears streamed from my aching eyes, as these reflections arose in my mind, until at length, worn out by

my own emotions, I sunk into a disturbed slumber.

"Early the next morning, Morgan brought a few lines from Horace, entreating that I would see him, that he might explain to me all that had occurred, before he returned to Oxford the following day. Surprised to find that he purposed quitting town a week earlier than I had been led to expect, and feeling that it would be but just to hear ere I condemned him, I appointed an hour for him to call, when I knew my parents had made an engagement to visit a friend, as my still slight indisposition would, I thought, be a sufficient excuse for my not accompanying them. When Horace appeared, he was not long in obtaining my pardon, for I found that he was more deceived than a deceiver; he acknowledged that the extraordinary circumstance of his father having entered into a contract with Mr. Jefferson, for the marriage of himself and Miss Jefferson, on his attaining the age of twenty-one, was one cause that he did not wish to ask my father's consent to his paying his addresses to me—as, until he was his own master, he was sure Lord Benfield

would never suffer him to form any engagement except with Miss Jefferson, if he could prevent it.

"'Miss Jefferson appears attached to you, Horace,' said I, 'from which I fear that she has been deceived as to the state of your affections.'

"'Never by me; for when in childhood my affianced wife was pointed out to me, I expressed what even then I felt, the most unqualified dislike to her; as we became older, Lady Benfield made a point of having her with us during the vacations, until my increasing dislike to her was so evident, that she thought it more prudent not to bring us together for some time: thus four years have elapsed since we met. But I have repeatedly told Lady Benfield and my father, that nothing should ever induce me to make that compound of affectation, meanness, illtemper, and deformity, my wife! During our late stay at Benfield, they promised to inform her, in the most delicate manner in their power, that the negociation was at an end. This I believed them to have done. Judge, then, my surprise, my indignation, at perceiving Miss Jefferson yesterday at my father's, and brought forward again as my betrothed bride!

So far I must admit, that Mrs. and Miss Jefferson came to town quite unexpectedly by Lord and Lady Benfield; but it was very plain that Miss Jefferson considered herself as still my affianced wife. When I found, on entering the drawing-room, that you were gone, I instantly retired to my apartment, and though followed thither by Lady Benfield, who besought me to accompany the party to the Opera, I positively refused. When, at a late hour, my father and mother returned, I joined them—accused them of having deceived me, and assured them I would not again meet Miss Jefferson. Words at length became so high between us, that I left their house at three this morning, with a determination never again to enter its doors, unless they changed their views. I have since called upon Miss Jefferson, having resolved not longer to trust to others informing her of the impossibility of my ever becoming her husband. I am almost ashamed, my Emily, to describe her conduct; it was unfeminine—almost disgusting! It was not without difficulty that I could gain resolution for the task I had undertaken, but having no safe alternative, I

thought it best to be explicit, and to say at once that my affections were irrevocably engaged, at the same time doing so with as much delicacy as was possible, and assuring her that my parents had long ago promised to put an end to such expectations as could only mar her more brilliant prospects. When casting her keen eyes upon the ground, with an affectation of modesty, while she shot furtive glances from the corners, she replied,

" 'I wish for no more brilliant prospect, Horace, than that of becoming your wife.'

" 'For a moment I was speechless with surprise; but recollecting the necessity of completing the demolition of her hopes, if she really possessed any, of ever becoming mine, I repeated that my affections were no longer my own to bestow, and that even were that not the case, I felt that I was not calculated to promote her happiness; since our dispositions and pursuits were entirely dissimilar. To this she replied, that these objections, strong as they appeared in my eyes, were in her opinion far from insurmountable, since any affection I might now feel for another was probably a mere boyish fancy,

which a short period would entirely remove; and that when my wife, it would be equally her duty as her pleasure to conform all her tastes to mine.. As she spoke a devil in her eye contradicted her words, which were uttered in the gentlest tone. Rising from my seat, somewhat irritated at her persisting, with so little delicacy, in her endeavour to keep me to an engagement into which I had never acceded, I said, 'To prevent further misunderstanding, I think it my duty, although a painful one, to tell you, Miss Jefferson, that under *no* circumstances can an union ever take place between us. Having explicitly stated this, and feeling assured that never, even in childhood, have I acted in such a manner as to cause in my parents or yourself any expectation that I would ratify the contract into which our fathers chose to enter—I take my leave.'

"'Stop, sir—stay Mr. Benfield, hear me,' she almost screamed out, her voice becoming hoarse with passion, and her countenance even more hideous than before; then, suddenly changing her manner and tone, and pretending to sigh deeply, and even to wipe a crocodile tear

from her eye. 'I cannot consent to break these bonds—we were bound to each other by our parents—we were, notwithstanding what you now say, bound together by early attachment—mine, with true feminine constancy, has been strengthened only by time—whilst you, with that fickleness to which your sex are prone, now love, or fancy that you love, some other, perhaps fairer form; but believing as I do, that the time will yet arrive when you will be fully sensible of the value of that heart, which even your inconstancy has not power to sever from you, I will patiently await its arrival!'

"Finding that Miss Jefferson was neither to be piqued nor persuaded into a destruction of the contract, which she hinted would eventually make her Viscountess Benfield, I left the house, scarcely able to refrain from openly expressing the disgust I felt at her conduct.

"'I could not have imagined it possible that any woman, more particularly a young one, could have been guilty of such indelicacy, however great her attachment might be.'

"'Attachment!' repeated Horace, with a slight curl of his lip; 'Miss Jefferson feels no

attachment towards me. I believe it is rather hatred and revenge, which leads her to endeavour to counteract my wishes; but let us no longer speak of this despicable woman; say you forgive me the pain I have caused you, and think of her no more.'

"I felt that I had not much to pardon, and therefore readily granted his request. Whilst Horace was yet with me, my father and mother returned, and upon hearing that their favourite young friend had called to take leave prior to going back to Oxford, my father expressed some surprise, as he said, judging from what he had heard the preceding day, he should have expected Miss Jefferson's arrival would have detained him in town to the latest possible moment.

"'The very cause of my hasty departure—Miss Jefferson ever was, and ever will be an object of indifference and dislike to me.'

"'I am not sorry to hear it,' replied my father; 'for however great her wealth may be, I cannot think such a woman calculated to form your happiness.'

"Horace then repeated to my parents some of those particulars which he had related to me

more at large. When he had concluded his recital, my father entreated him to endeavour to conciliate his parents in every way that would not interfere with his happiness or his principles, and to make all possible excuse for their natural wish, that he should possess Miss Jefferson's immense wealth.

"During the short period we remained in town after the departure of Horace, our visits at Lord Benfield's were less frequent than before, for Miss Jefferson, who was always with Lady Benfield, was as disagreeable to my parents as myself; and since the *eclaircissement* which had taken place between Sir Edward Hume and me, I fancied I perceived an abatement in her ladyship's regard. I sometimes flattered myself it might be my imagination which deceived me; but it frequently appeared to me as if Miss Jefferson had usurped that place in her affection of which I had once been so proud; although on more than one occasion she had whispered, 'How much I feel the sad exchange, Emily, of Miss Jefferson's society for yours; yet she is most amiable, and I doubt not will prove a valuable wife to my son.'

"I could make no reply to such observations beyond a movement of assent. When the time arrived in which we were to bid adieu to the fascination and dissipation of the metropolis, Lady Benfield expressed her regret at our departure in the most forcible manner, saying, as she pressed me affectionately in her arms, 'Farewell, Emily!—child of my heart! Oh! that you could be in reality my daughter, as you already are that of my affection; but you may yet make me happy by becoming the wife of my friend.'

"'Oh no,' I replied.

"'Be it so, my love,—I will say no more on the subject. Farewell, until we again meet.'

"Then kissing my forehead, this fascinating woman took a graceful leave of my mother, and we parted.

"After having spent three months in London, the retirement of Benfield was particularly agreeable. Spring has ever been to me the most delightful of all seasons; and although it was now far advanced, never did I inhale its pure breezes with more pleasure, than after spending so long

a period in the dense atmosphere of the metropolis.

"Our return was hailed with delight, not only by all my father's parishioners, but by our more wealthy neighbours, who seemed to vie with each other in expressions of gratification at our return, after so unwonted an absence. Even deprived of the presence of Horace, I was happy—happiness, alas! but too fleeting! My dear mother, always delicate, having taken a severe cold whilst visiting a sick cottager, was obliged to have recourse to such strong measures to subdue the inflammation with which it was attended, that we were fearful her constitution would have sunk under them. Happily, however, she was enabled to rally so far as to give us every reason to hope her ultimate restoration to perfect health, by avoiding cold during the summer, and spending the ensuing winter in the south of Devon.

"During my mother's illness, I received many kind letters from Lady Benfield, and soon afterwards one, which announced her ladyship's intention of visiting the park with a large party

in consequence of his lordship's wish to celebrate his son's coming of age at the oldest of his family seats. By no one was their return anticipated with so much pleasure as myself. Of Lady Benfield I recollected only the kindness she had shown me, which the affectionate letters I had received from her since we parted, gave me cause to believe that I should continue to experience: and the certainty that I should see Horace, who had written to my father that, in accordance with his advice, he had sued for and obtained a reconciliation with his parents, was no small addition to the happiness I had in prospect. Immediately upon the arrival of Lady Benfield at the park, she requested that I would go there to remain some time. I at first declined her urgent entreaties for my company; but as my mother wished me to go, saying that change of air and scene would be conducive to my health, after my long confinement to her apartments, I at length acceded to her ladyship's wish.

"On my arrival at the park, I found that Sir Edward Hume and Miss Jefferson were, with many other visiters, either already arrived, or

shortly expected. Upon hearing that the former was coming to remain some time, I instantly proposed returning home; but Lady Benfield rallied me so successfully on what she termed the folly and apparent vanity of such conduct, that I could scarcely avoid yielding to her superior judgment and knowledge of the world. She assured me that nothing could be more absurd than to shun the company of a man merely because he had been an unsuccessful suitor, as in society those little affairs of the heart were not again thought of; and by adopting so different a line of conduct from that usually pursued, I should, in fact, give Sir Edward more encouragement than by remaining at the park, and treating him as I did others. 'Besides,' she added, 'Horace would be much disappointed, if on his arrival to-day he did not see his friends from the rectory.'

"This was the first intimation I had received of the time in which Horace was expected, and I fear it had great weight in determining me to remain, at any rate, until I knew whether my parents thought it wrong that I should continue there. Whether Lady Benfield suspected

that might be the case, I know not, as her eyes were fixed upon a beautiful bouquet she was arranging; but rising from her seat at the conclusion of her last speech, she presented the nosegay to me, saying, 'It is time, my love, to dress. I will trust to your kindness not to disappoint me, after giving me cause to hope for your company.'

"On entering the drawing-room before dinner, I found a large party assembled. Amongst those whom I had not in the morning seen, were Miss Jefferson, Sir Edward Hume, and Horace. The two latter instantly came forward to meet me, and so difficult is it to behave with cold and ceremonious politeness towards those with whom you have been upon a more familiar footing, that I extended my hand almost as frankly to Sir Edward as to Horace.

"When dinner was announced, Lady Benfield desired her eldest son to lead Miss Jefferson to the eating-room; but ere she could express her wish, he had offered his arm to myself, and with a frigid bow to Miss Jefferson, he deputed his friend, Mr. Morrison, to the honour of escorting her. In sitting and conversing to-

gether at dinner, we did not apprehend that we should call forth any peculiar remarks, since it was natural that Lady Benfield's son should be attentive to one so evidently favoured by her as myself. Mr. Morrison was an old school-fellow and intimate friend of Horace's, whom I had frequently heard name him with the highest eulogiums; and the terms in which he now spoke of his superior talents and many excellent qualities, fully prepared me to esteem and like him. He was somewhat older than his friend, and had just entered into holy orders.

"In a house so full of company as that at Benfield, there were few opportunities for Horace to see me alone, but where the party is very large, you may generally converse with more privacy than when in a smaller one; though our means of doing so were much circumscribed by Lady Benfield, who, without apparent design, constantly prevented our sitting near each other: and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, we continually found ourselves placed where we least wished—that is, Horace next to Miss Jefferson, and myself next Sir Edward; yet it always appeared so entirely the result of acci-

dent, that it was not until a much later period that I was aware it was by the contrivance of our hostess we were so frequently thus situated. But as Sir Edward never by word or look expressed any sentiment that might not have been felt by the most indifferent acquaintance, I could not make any decided objection to being seated next to him.

"Having expressed some surprise that Horace should have consented to meet Miss Jefferson, after what had passed between her and himself, he replied, 'I have told Miss Jefferson that my affections are engaged to another—that I never can—that I never will marry her. I have told my father and mother the same. If, under these circumstances, they choose to ask her to the house, and she consents to come, I cannot be responsible for the construction the world may put upon it. All those whom I most esteem know that my conduct towards Miss Jefferson has been open and honourable. By Mr. Seymour's advice I sought a reconciliation with my parents, when they expressed a perfect readiness to comply with my wish that the contract entered into by Lord Benfield and Mr. Jefferson should be destroyed; merely request-

ing in return that I should behave with civility to Miss Jefferson when we should accidentally meet; which, after what she had heard from myself, and what they would immediately relate to her, she could not misconstrue; as were the entanglement in which they were involved with her to be violently dissolved, the consequences might to them prove very distressing. My father issued his *commands*, and my mother her *entreaties* that I would comply with their wishes —but when I found that Miss Jefferson and her aunt were asked to the celebration of my majority, I should instantly have quitted the house, had I not heard that under the same roof was an antidote in my beloved Emily.'

"What reply could I make to such cogent reasoning as this? Horace had more than once expressed a wish that an union between us had already taken place, since it then would have been impossible for human power to separate us. He now, equally to my grief and surprise, proposed a private marriage.

"I at first rejected the proposition with indignation, then bursting into tears, exclaimed, 'This is indeed cruel—little did I imagine that you, Horace, would ever endeavour to beguile

me into the commission of such an impropriety.' —Seeing how much I was hurt, he besought my forgiveness, and at length succeeded in soothing my agitation, and convincing me that he had made this proposal only in the hope, by so doing, of leading to our ultimate happiness.

"But the ice once broken, Horace frequently reverted to the subject; and although I still refused to accede to his wishes, each day his reasons appeared to acquire strength, whilst mine became weaker. Yet the moment he quitted me all my objections returned in their full force, and I felt astonishment that I should have suffered them to obtain any power over my mind.

"We again met, and every idea of duty to my parents—of female delicacy—of propriety was almost forgotten; for Horace pleaded with such an eloquence and fervour of affection, whilst his tearful eyes, even more than his words, stated his apprehension that only by such means should we avoid a separation, that I was unable to reply.

"At this moment, Mr. Morrison passed the garden seat on which this conversation took place. On observing my agitated appearance he would have gone forward and without speak-

ing, but was stopped by Horace, who, telling me that his friend was already acquainted with the circumstances in which we were placed, entreated that I would hear his opinion on the subject in discussion, since he would be a disinterested and honourable counsellor.

"Mr. Morrison, having requested my leave to speak his sentiments, then said, 'Believe me, Miss Seymour, I abhor clandestine proceedings as much as yourself, and must fairly acknowledge that I deeply regret the conduct of my friend in having addressed you without the knowledge of Mr. Seymour. On that subject it is unfortunately too late now to speak, since what might have proved only a transient fancy has, by indulgence on both sides, become so confirmed an affection, that if severed I fear neither will ever know happiness. Can Mr. and Mrs. Seymour be happy if their only child is otherwise? I am sure they cannot. Whilst, on the contrary, I greatly fear, notwithstanding all that has passed on the subject, that Lord and Lady Benfield would rather see their son stretched out a corpse before their eyes, than consent to his union with any one except Miss Jefferson. Not for him do they

want her wealth, but for their own gratification. Supposing this to be true, do you, Miss Seymour, believe that Mr. Seymour would ever give his consent that a marriage should take place between you and my friend, after the refusal of Lord and Lady Benfield. I know, I see, that you cannot believe he would.—There are then but two courses for you to pursue. One is to part instantly and for ever—the other to enter into a private marriage. I should not suggest this latter, did I not feel perfectly convinced, that Mr. and Mrs. Seymour would not object to Horace for a son-in-law; whilst Lord and Lady Benfield I am equally sure would infinitely prefer you to Miss Jefferson as a daughter, were it not on account of her wealth. I came here, Miss Seymour, at the urgent entreaty of my friend; I have, during the fortnight I have been here, been an unsuspected, but not uninterested observer of all around me, and I have consequently come to the decision of entreating you instantly and for ever to separate, or immediately to become man and wife.'

"As Mr. Morrison spoke with energy and

deep feeling, I was too much affected to reply except by my tears.

"'Emily, my own Emily, must we then part,' whispered Horace.

"'Oh, no, no!' I almost convulsively replied.

"'Will you then consent to be mine?'

"I did not answer; but ere we separated he had gained from me a promise to meet him at the church the next morning, when Mr. Morrison would unite us for ever.

"I do not doubt that Mr. Morrison acted most conscientiously in advising us as he did, though had he urged us to open our hearts, and to throw ourselves upon the kindness of my affectionate parents, he would have evinced sounder judgment. But maturity of judgment could scarcely be expected at three-and-twenty!

"On the following day, I walked out as usual before breakfast, and accompanied by Horace and Mr. Morrison, who vainly strove to keep up my fainting spirits, met at the church my maid, Morgan, who had, without difficulty, obtained the key. In a few short minutes I became in the eyes of heaven a wife!

"Our marriage I was aware was not legally binding to myself; but Horace—although, owing to some circumstances connected with Lord Benfield's affairs, it was not generally known—had been of age for some days! That day I returned home, the time which I had promised to remain at the park being expired, and my mother wishing for my society.

"When I received the caresses of my dearest father and mother, I felt myself so utterly undeserving, that I could with difficulty refrain from throwing myself at her feet, and confessing all my imprudence—all my guilt! The uneasiness I felt at the culpability of my conduct caused so severe an indisposition as to confine me to my room for several days. Worlds would I have given, had I possessed them, to confess all to my parents; but I had no longer a right to act for myself—I had thrown off the authority of my father and mother, to be in subjection to a husband, whom it was my duty to consult ere I took any step which might prove prejudicial to his interest.

"In a very few days all secrecy would be at an end; for Horace's being of age would not only then be a matter of public rejoicing, but

the arrangements which must be entered into with his father, relative to his pecuniary affairs, would preclude on our part the necessity of longer concealment.

"The day on which the heir of Benfield was acknowledged to be one-and-twenty was ushered in by the ringing of bells and bands of music, whilst oxen roasted whole—ale flowing in every direction—bonfires, and all the other accompaniments usual in celebrating the majority of the heir of a noble family, took place. In the evening was a splendid ball, to which all the country families of any importance were invited. My mother was not yet so entirely recovered as to venture there, but, accompanied by my father, I joined the gay throng. Never did I think Lady Benfield more resplendently beautiful than on this evening. Her dress was, in honour of the occasion, unusually magnificent, and in her air and countenance there was a look of triumph which accorded well with her style of beauty, and the splendour of her costume. As she advanced to meet us, she said to me,

"'This, my love, is as it ought to be—your youthful charms are seen to most advantage, simply attired in white; whilst I, being more

advanced in years, require the aid of dress; is it not so, my friend?' placing her beautiful hand, from which she had drawn her glove, upon my father's arm, and fixing her full and eloquent eyes upon his countenance with an expression, which, for a moment, made me cast mine upon the ground; on raising them, I perceived in my father a heightened colour and gravity of demeanour, almost amounting to sternness, whilst he replied, coldly,

"'Your ladyship must be charming in any dress—but on that day on which your son attains his majority, no dress can be so becoming as that of a matron.' A glance of his brilliant eye conveyed more censure than his words—for Lady Benfield, though attired becomingly and sumptuously, and at all times exposing her personal charms to the fullest extent of the fashion of the day, never made a greater display of her beautiful bust and finely rounded arms, than at this moment. She took the implied reproof in good part, and shaking her head, with a smile, replied,

"'When I have received my guests, come to me, my good Mentor, and I will listen to you with all the deference of a pupil.' Then as she

glided forward to receive some other visiters, we mingled with the crowd. I had foolishly flattered myself that I should dance with Horace early in the evening, forgetting that on such an occasion as this, the attentions of the heir of Benfield must be bestowed on those, who from their superior rank, had higher claims than any the rector's daughter could boast. Under these circumstances, I danced with little pleasure or animation. To my great surprise, Frederick asked me to become his partner, to which I was obliged to accede, although I should greatly have preferred sitting by my father. As he led me towards my place, he said, in his usual sarcastic manner—

"'On a night like this, when the heir of Benfield is occupied with the noble of the land, Miss Seymour condescends to honour a younger scion of that house with her notice.'

"'Indeed,' said I, 'you do me great injustice, if you suppose that any difference in my manner towards you and Mr. Benfield originates in his being an elder, or you a younger brother.'

"'It may be so, for mine is not a fascinating

form, and Horace is certainly a figure to win a fair lady's regard, I must allow.' As he spoke thus a bitter smile played around his mouth; then adding, 'but what think you of Horace's bride?' and he fixed his keen and meaning eyes upon my face, with an earnest and inquiring gaze. As I blushed and trembled under his inquisitorial inspection, I inwardly inquired if he had discovered our marriage—but ere I could, even in thought, reply, he continued with a cool indifference of manner, 'I fear she does not meet your approbation—she certainly has not much beauty to boast, but my lady mother says of her, as she does of all plain women, that she is *vastly amiable.*' I involuntarily followed the direction of Frederick's eyes, and perceived them fixed upon Miss Jefferson, who, dressed in the extremity of the reigning fashion, and shining a perfect galaxy of diamonds, was at that time dancing with the Earl of Enmore. Her plain person and repulsive countenance appeared to peculiar disadvantage, when contrasted with a lovely good-humoured looking girl who stood next to her, whilst the defects of her figure and sallowness of her skin, which gave

its tinge even to the rouge with which her cheeks were liberally supplied, were rendered more conspicuous by the magnificence of her jewels, and fashionable exposure of her person.

"'You surely admire that dress at any rate, Miss Seymour,' continued Frederick; 'I am convinced that her milliner must have had great difficulty in placing so much finery on so *pétite* a person—how it will shine in the *Magazin du Mode* of the next month.' Frederick thus proceeded ridiculing Miss Jefferson's dress, person, and manner, and, I fear, beguiling me of an occasional smile for some time; when, suddenly, he put a stop to my blameable amusement by assuming a grave air, and with an affected sigh, saying, 'This is surely too bad in us, Miss Seymour—the *bosom friend* and only brother of Horace, thus to ridicule the chosen of his heart—or of his purse, (which in the present case are synonymous terms), for, since he must marry her, notwithstanding what has passed on the subject, it is the duty of his friends to endeavour to be blind to her failings and use a magnifying glass, only when looking out for her beauties. I would gladly use the aforesaid magnifying glass, if

you would kindly point out to me such beauties and perfections as have attracted your admiration.—What, not a word?—Then I must suppose that none exist—Alas, poor Horace!' As a smile of irony wreathed around his thin lips, he fixed his penetrating eyes upon me, and then said, 'I am known to be a sad satirical fellow, but that you should encourage my satire, and in such a case, I own surprises me.'

"Colouring with anger, I replied,

"'I am really ashamed of myself for having listened thus long to your severe remarks upon Miss Jefferson, not because I think her likely to become your brother's wife——'

"'Indeed!' said Frederick, interrupting me; 'what is your reason for supposing Horace will not marry her?'

"'Because he is not attached to her, and she is in no respect calculated to make him happy.'

"'I could give a much stronger reason: Horace Benfield is *not* attached to Miss Jefferson, and he *is* attached to Miss Seymour! Nay, start not, my fair friend; do you think we are all blind; no, no, we plainly see on whom Horace has fixed his affections—but he must

marry Miss Jefferson, notwithstanding—for her broad lands—bags of rupees and jewels, which have decorated the wives of the princes of Hindostan are almost beyond calculation—whilst we are poor in all save rank. The affair is one of barter. The heir of Benfield will become the possessor of immense wealth! The Nabob's daughter will be the future Viscountess Benfield!—This is one of the advantages attendant upon priority of birth.'

"As he said these words, that bitter, scornful smile, peculiar to himself, was again visible. At this moment we were required to go down the dance, and the subject was not again renewed. In the course of the evening I had the gratification of dancing and having some conversation with Horace, which, on his part, consisted of expressions of affectionate admiration—on mine, of confiding tenderness. As I beheld him in person and manner far excelling all who on that occasion were assembled at the park, and observed many ladies of the highest rank anxious to attract his attention, I felt more grateful than ever for a preference which conferred such happiness upon me.

"The festivities at the park were kept up with great spirit during three successive days, two of which only I was a participator in them, requesting to be allowed to remain with my mother on the third. On the following morning my father was requested to be at Lord Benfield's, in consequence of his signature being requisite, as a trustee in his lordship's marriage settlements, to some papers, which were then only waiting the signing of the various parties concerned..

"Lady Benfield having requested that I would accompany my father, and spend the day with her, I did so. On our arrival at the park, we found the numerous visiters, with the exception of Mrs. and Miss Jefferson, Sir Edward Hume, and Mr. Morrison, already departed. But the company had received an addition in two eminent lawyers, Mr. Turner and Mr. Wilson, who were Lord Benfield's agents, and men of business from town. The latter gentleman acted as his lordship's private agent in many affairs which did not come under the cognizance of the partnership. Lord Benfield informed my father immediately upon his arrival that some trifling

alteration appeared requisite in one of the deeds, which would cause the execution of them to be postponed until after dinner.

"I was somewhat surprised to perceive, that the gentlemen came into the drawing-room to transact their business in the evening; though, from the great size of the room, a conversation might with ease have been carried on at one extremity without being overheard by those at the other. The whole party, with the exception of Mrs. and Miss Jefferson and myself, were requested to assemble around a table on which various papers were lying, as all were either principals in the business on hand, or would be required as witnesses. Lady Benfield having requested we would amuse ourselves with books or conversation whilst she was occupied with the lawyers, left the two ladies and myself; when I immediately took up a book, although I felt too much interested in the scene that was passing near me to pay much attention to its contents. Mr. Wilson commenced reading some of the papers before him in an under tone, which I imagined was too rapid and indistinct to be understood even by those who were contiguous

to him. And in a short time Horace interrupted him with a request that he would read less rapidly, and more distinctly, as he could not comprehend the meaning of what was read.

"'It is,' replied Mr. Wilson, 'quite unnecessary, sir, I assure you. Lord Benfield has carefully examined all these deeds, and is quite satisfied that they are drawn up according to his directions.'

"'Yes, Horace,' said his lordship, 'I have thoroughly attended to every line; and find that they are quite in accordance with the instructions given by me, in conformity with the agreement between you and myself: you need not dwell, therefore, unnecessarily, Mr. Wilson, on the contents of these papers.'

"'Excuse me, my lord,' replied Horace, 'if I persist in saying, that it is quite necessary that I should both hear and understand their contents, ere I put my signature to these deeds. I have no doubt of their being drawn up according to our wishes, but I have long resolved never to put my name to any paper, the contents of which I do not know and understand.'

"'It is impossible, my dear sir—absolutely

and *bona fide* impossible—that you can adhere to such a resolution. None but a lawyer can understand the technicalities of the law; therefore if I read these papers distinctly, it will only occupy more time, and you will comprehend no more than when I commenced.'

"'I am afraid, Mr. Wilson, there is too much truth in what you say, and much it is to be regretted that there are such technicalities, since they lead to frequent *charlatanrie* and fraud; however that may be, I choose to hear—and I will endeavour to comprehend.'

"Mr. Turner, who had hitherto taken no part in the discussion, now said, 'Mr. Benfield, you are perfectly right in what you say—take the advice of an old man, and never suffer yourself to be induced to put your signature to any papers, the contents of which you are not in full possession of; for you may be assured, that if the technicalities be such as to prevent a man of clear understanding like yourself comprehending them, there is something either erroneous in the construction, or something which you are not intended to fathom.'

"I here observed Lord Benfield and Mr.

Wilson exchange looks of a somewhat ambiguous character; and as the latter stood with the papers in his hand, awaiting the orders of his principal, my father said, 'I am not aware that the deed which Mr. Wilson commenced reading is one with which I have any right to interfere; but as one of your lordship's trustees, I must request to be allowed, not only to hear, but see such deeds as I may be required to sign.'

"Lord Benfield then turning angrily towards Mr. Wilson, said, 'Begin again then, Wilson; and since they will have it so, read loud enough for all in the room to hear—and, if they can, to understand you.'

"Mr. Wilson bowed, and immediately recommenced reading in a stentorian voice the deed in his hand. But although it was impossible for me not to hear, I understood little more than before.

"Horace listened with deep attention, until Mr. Wilson had concluded the numerous skins of parchment immediately before him, when he said, 'If I understand this correctly, I am expected to sign away all claim to the various

properties of Emdolf, Winston, and Alston, leaving only Benfield to revert to me at my father's death. Am I right in this, Mr. Wilson?'

"'Quite so, sir.'

"'The present rental of Benfield,' continued Horace, 'is eight thousand pounds per annum, whilst that of the other property amounts to half as much more.'

"'Precisely, sir.'

"'Pray what equivalent am I to receive for this?' asked Horace.

"'I do not understand you, sir, I thought that my lord and you had arranged all this,' replied Mr. Wilson, with some appearance of confusion.

"'I know not, my lord, where, or with whom, this misunderstanding originates,' said Horace, now addressing his father, 'but either you or myself labour under some strange mistake. You certainly asked me, at least I understood you so, to join you in breaking the entail of the Emdolf property, the rental of which, six thousand a year, would, I was told, enable you to pay off all the debts you had

contracted; whilst, with regard to the forty thousand pounds in settlement upon the Winston estate (ten of which, at the death of my mother and yourself, was to descend to Frederick, the remainder to me), I had readily coincided in your wish that the whole sum should eventually be divided equally between us. In return for these pecuniary sacrifices, all I required was, that the Alston estate, amounting to two thousand per annum, should be immediately given up to me. Such, I understood, my lord, was our agreement; but, from the document which Mr. Wilson has just read, it appears, when freed from those technicalities of which he spoke, to mean, in plain English, that I am to resign all claim to various estates, to the amount of twelve thousand per annum, and there is no additional provision for Frederick or myself. That Mr. Wilson has totally misunderstood your lordship's instructions, I cannot doubt, although I am somewhat surprised that you should not have discovered so flagrant an error.'

"'Horace!' replied Lord Benfield, with ill-suppressed anger, 'you were mistaken; I never

thought—I never could have said, that the Emdolf property would enable me to discharge my debts, for my incumbrances are such as can only be cleared off by the sale of all the estates which Wilson has enumerated: in return for which, you will find that I have provided for you most abundantly; but you are impatient, sir, and your impatience leads you to forget the respect which is due to your father. There are various documents, but we thought it might be better to sign them regularly as we read them, to prevent confusion; but your impatience, and want of confidence in the honour of your father, delays and disarranges every thing.'

"'Pardon me, my lord, if I say, that at the same time that I have every confidence in the honour of my father, since I perceive that we have totally misunderstood each other, it may be as well not at present to trouble our friends further, as great alterations must be made, ere I can place my name to any of these deeds, unless, indeed, there is an antidote in the other parchments, to the contents of the first, in which case, the sooner it is made known, the more agreeable it will be to me.'

"'Hem—hem!' said Mr. Wilson, 'I think it would be better, and more in the usual course of business, Mr. Benfield, if you were to put your name to the deed I have just read to you, in the first instance.'

"'I think quite differently,' said Mr. Turner, 'if you do not choose to read the other deeds without more delay, with his lordship's permission, I will do so myself.'

"'Read them, Mr. Wilson!' said Lord Benfield, in a tone of unusual fierceness.

"With some appearance of nervous tremour, Mr. Wilson obeyed the order of his lordship, and read a deed in which the name of Frederick Benfield occurred very frequently; when it was concluded, Horace, turning towards his father, commenced addressing him, but his lordship, in a loud, authoritative manner, said, 'I command you not to speak until you have heard all these deeds, the minute contents of which you express, so much anxiety to ascertain, then, sir, say what you choose.'

"Horace bowed, resumed an attentive posture, and Mr. Wilson proceeded to read another document, which, as far as I could comprehend,

seemed to be a contract between Lord Benfield, and the late Mr. Jefferson, binding themselves in the payment of an immense penalty, in case the child of either, upon attaining the age of twenty-one, should refuse to enter into the marriage, which seemed to form the basis of the treaty.

"Although I sat at a considerable distance from the party thus employed, and retained a book in my hand, my attention was too deeply engrossed by what was going forward, to think much of its contents. Yet, with the greatest anxiety to comprehend what Mr. Wilson read, the real meaning seemed to me so enveloped in law terms, that I doubted much whether my conclusions might not be altogether erroneous.

"Once Horace said, 'Hold, Mr. Wilson, that deed is quite irrelevant to the subject in discussion!'

"'No, sir, it is not; I choose that it should be read!' said Lord Benfield.

"Horace made no rejoinder, and Mr. Wilson proceeded to the end.

"'Now, Horace, you perceive how abun-

dantly you are provided for by my care and anxiety for your welfare. Mr. Jefferson and myself were equally solicitous for the prosperity and happiness of our children; our wish for the alliance of our families was mutual: my being somewhat embarrassed, was with his immense wealth, to him a matter of indifference. Your marriage with Miss Jefferson, will remove every pecuniary inconvenience from yourself and family—'

" 'Excuse me, my lord, if I interrupt you to declare once more, what I have before told you very frequently, that a union can never take place between that lady and myself; I have but one observation to make, ere I quit the room, which is this, that I not only agreed most readily, but proposed myself, to resign ten thousand pounds of the thirty settled upon me at my mother's death, to Frederick; but to give up the whole sum to him, as I perceive your lordship has arranged, is totally out of the question. He would in that case be, as a younger son, a much richer man than his elder brother, with the dignity of an ancient title to maintain. Now, my lord, I take my leave, until

such arrangements be made, as may make my presence here desirable.'

"As Horace concluded, he turned towards the door, when his father exclaimed loudly, 'Stay, sir—I command you to stay! Miss Jefferson, may I trouble you to come here?'

"Miss Jefferson, who with her aunt, was seated not far from me, now arose, and walked towards the table around which the party were assembled, his lordship advancing to meet her, when leading her towards his son, who was still standing between the table and the door through which he had appeared to intend departing, he continued—'Horace Benfield, I call upon you publicly to ratify the contract into which I entered with Mr. Jefferson; allow the wishes of a father to have some influence; allow pity for a young lady, who might command the hand of almost any man in England, but who has surrendered her heart wholly to you, to have some sway over you. Miss Jefferson kindly agrees to overlook all that has passed. You will by this marriage gain an amiable, an admirable wife, whose almost boundless wealth will restore the family of Benfield to all its ancient

splendour, and she will gain a husband, of whom the first lady in the kingdom might be proud; thus you will not only be happy in yourselves and each other, but you will make Lady Benfield and myself supremely so.'

"As Lord Benfield, standing with one hand of Miss Jefferson's folded in his, thus addressed his son, who stood before him firm and erect, his head somewhat thrown back with a slight air of *hauteur*, his cheeks flushed, and his brilliant speaking eyes intently fixed upon those of his lordship, which sunk under his gaze; whilst a slight indication of contempt was visible in his mouth, which even the recollection that it was his father who addressed him, could not entirely subdue. The rest of the party were standing with their eyes eagerly fixed upon the father and son, during this extraordinary colloquy.

"At the termination of Lord Benfield's address, he added, 'Let me thus unite hands which have so long been affianced to each other.' Then taking Horace's unresisting hand, he attempted to place Miss Jefferson's within it.

"At her touch he recoiled, as if stung by

a scorpion, exclaiming, 'Hold, my lord, urge this no further; I would willingly have avoided giving you offence, or shocking the delicacy of Miss Jefferson, by a public declaration of my sentiments, which are already well known to both. Surely after what has passed, Miss Jefferson would feel, as any woman of delicate mind must, that my addresses would be an insult.' You have obliged me thus publicly to declare, that I never can avail myself of the offer of Miss Jefferson's hand, and, I doubt not, she will readily agree to the destruction of a contract, which would assign her to so insignificant an individual as myself, when many of the greatest nobles in the land would be proud to call her theirs.'

"'No, Mr. Benfield,' replied Miss Jefferson, looking if possible more hideous than ever, 'my dear and ever-lamented father wished for our union—Lord and Lady Benfield, whom I have ever regarded as parents, honour me so far as to do the same, and I cannot be so deficient in filial affection for him, who is now no more, or grateful attachment to these kind friends, as to cancel a contract which may yet

be executed; since I can scarcely doubt, that a time will arrive, when my faithful and devoted affection will meet its just reward from you.'

"Here Miss Jefferson tried, though unsuccessfully, to blush, and cast her eyes upon the ground. When a woman throws off the modesty of her sex, she loses her greatest charm; thus Miss Jefferson, by publicly declaring her determination to retain the contract, which Lord Benfield had entered into, in the hope of eventually compelling Horace to execute it, lost all claim to consideration. There were, I imagine, but few in the room who were not apprized of the scene which was intended to be acted, though its meaning I could not divine; since it was very improbable that Horace should be drawn into a public engagement with Miss Jefferson, after what had before passed.

"For a few moments Horace appeared stunned by that lady's unfeminine conduct, then rallying, he thus addressed her: 'Highly as I feel honoured, madam, by the readiness you are so good as to express, to fulfil the wishes of our parents, I am obliged to repeat to you *publicly*, what I have before done *privately*,

that my affections are irrevocably engaged. You, my lord, have long known this, therefore what your meaning is, in thus placing me in so painful a situation, I cannot conceive.'

"At this moment Miss Jefferson began to sob hysterically, and Lady Benfield, who had taken no part in what had passed, but reclined in a graceful attitude, with an abstracted air, upon a couch, during the whole time, now rose from her seat, and advancing towards her, soothingly proposed that she should quit the room; to which Miss Jefferson having readily acceded, she said to me, 'Come, my dear Emily, let us retire; had I surmised these difficulties, I would not have asked you to visit me to-day; but I thought all we had to do, was to hear Mr. Wilson mumble over a few sheets of parchment, sign our names, and be at rest. I am quite grieved, my love, that you should have been thus bored.' Then turning to Miss Jefferson, who was still weeping, she continued, 'Cheer up, my sweet friend, the game is not yet lost, the cards are still in your own hands, therefore play them well, and success attend you.'

"What her ladyship meant, I could not con ceive, either at that time, or long afterwards. From the adjoining room, we heard Lord Benfield's voice in loud and angry tones, but as her ladyship was playing a bravura at that time upon the pianoforte, the words were fortunately quite unintelligible.

"As soon as the gentlemen entered the room in which we were seated, my father ordered his carriage, and in a few minutes we departed; Horace offering to escort me to it, and my father withdrawing my arm from his, saying, 'I thank you, Mr. Benfield, but my daughter requires no aid beyond mine.'

"Horace looked deeply wounded, but bowing respectfully, turned from me with a sigh. My father spoke not until we arrived at home; when folding his arms around me, and begging Heaven to bless me, we parted; and I gladly retired to my apartment, where I relieved my full heart in tears.

"The following morning; immediately after breakfast, which usually one of our most sociable meals, was this day taken in almost entire silence; my father observed, that I should

probably wish to know what had passed the preceding day, after the ladies had left the room. Scarcely able to speak with composure, I made a movement of assent.

" 'It is in fact necessary,' said he, 'that you should be informed of every particular, however painful it may be to your feelings. No sooner had you left us, than Horace, unable longer to controul his indignation at the treatment he had received, warmly accused his father of having wilfully deceived him, not only with regard to the state of his affairs, but the nature of the bond he had entered into with Mr. Jefferson, as likewise in having promised, that provided he would celebrate his majority at Benfield Park, he (Lord Benfield) would undertake that Miss Jefferson should give up all hope of an union with himself, and that he should never more be importuned on the subject. On the faith of that promise he had come there, and on the assurance that Miss Jefferson had entirely and for ever resigned all idea, or even wish, of fulfilling the contract into which their parents had entered, he had consented to remain. But, finding that he had been deceived on every

point, he should instantly quit the park, without signing any of the deeds prepared. With difficulty I observed Lord Benfield kept his passion within any bounds, whilst his son spoke; and he had no sooner ceased, than his lordship burst forth with the fury of a maniac, rather than the anger of a parent; his language was such as I cannot repeat. With the most violent invectives, he accused his son of wishing to see him reduced to the most abject state of beggary. At length the very violence of his rage obliged him to stop; when Horace replied, that he had flattered himself his conduct, in having so readily agreed to resign the principal part of his expectations, to clear his father of his embarrassments, would have prevented so cruel and unjust an accusation; but since he found that the resignation of his patrimony would be unavailing, unless accompanied by the sacrifice of himself, to arrange what he should always consider a gaming transaction, he must absolutely decline doing so.

"'Horace,' said Lord Benfield, trembling with rage, 'I understand your meaning—you would resign property, but you would not resign a baby-faced girl, to save me from perdition—

mark me! *eternal perdition;* for the instant you marry Miss Seymour, a bullet shall go through my head!'

"At the repetition of these words from my father, I involuntarily made a faint exclamation, and covered my face with my hands, as if by so doing I could shut out the horrible idea from my mind.

"My father hesitated, then gently added, 'I grieve, my Emily, to pain you thus, but it is necessary you should know all that passed. I was, as you may suppose, almost horror-struck —indeed, I was so much shocked, that I had not power to interrupt his lordship, who continued to express himself thus: 'I am in debt more—much more than all I can possibly derive from the sale of these various properties: how then can I meet the bond to Miss Jefferson, which would be forfeited were you to marry any other person whilst she remains single? It would be impossible I should do so, you must be aware. But should you consent to fulfil that contract, not only would you gain an immensely rich bride, and be put in immediate possession of a hundred thousand pounds, but your father would

be released from every pecuniary difficulty; since, instead of forfeiting, I should myself receive an equally large sum of money!'

"'By so doing, my lord,' replied Horace, 'I might, it is true, liberate you from the trammels in which you have chosen to involve yourself; but it would be to shackle myself infinitely more, and though the chains around me might be golden ones, they would be such as I could never consent to wear. No, my lord—what you ask, I again repeat, I never can agree to; but I will still do all that is possible, consistently with a regard to my own honour and happiness, for your assistance. I will sign the deeds, enabling you to dispose of every estate except Benfield, upon condition that a farm to the amount of one thousand a year, is from this period secured to me, and twenty thousand for Frederick, at the death of Lady Benfield, whilst the remaining proceeds are placed in Mr. Turner's hands, for the payment of your lordship's creditors. I shall thus make myself one of the poorest peers in England, should I live to possess the title of Benfield—more I cannot grant—more your lordship ought not to ask.'

"Instead of thanking the noble-minded, generous youth, Lord Benfield replied, with a countenance almost black with suppressed anger, 'I accept your terms, sir, since you refuse to marry as I wish you. But observe me, Horace Benfield, the instant you marry Emily Seymour —for such I know is your intention—is the last of my existence; unless ere that time Miss Jefferson be married. Little did I imagine, when I signed the contract which was to rescue me from my difficulties, and place my family in affluence, that I should be thus thwarted by a perverse and obstinate boy, and a baby-faced girl.'

"'If, my lord, you mean my daughter by that epithet, I think I may venture to say, that she is not aware that Mr. Benfield entertained for her any sentiment more tender than friendship; and I am quite sure, that she would not condescend to enter any family, in which she had reason to believe her alliance was not wished for. I have been an equally pained and unwilling spectator of this scene, and should not have remained such, could I have quitted the room without violating my duty as a trustee; but I must now, in the name of my daughter

and self, assure your lordship, that you may be quite at ease with regard to your son and herself, as she will *never* marry Mr. Benfield.'

"Horace more than once attempted to interrupt me, and as I concluded speaking, again made an effort to address me, when his father angrily commanded his silence, saying, 'Thank you, Seymour. I do not wish to offend you or your fair daughter, whom I admire exceedingly; but nothing can save me from destruction, except Horace's remaining single, in which case Miss Jefferson will have to pay the forfeit most probably, instead of myself.'

"Horace was overpowered by the agitation he had undergone, and as some alterations were necessary in the deeds (which are to be signed to-morrow, when this unpleasant business will be concluded), we adjourned to the room in which you and the other ladies were seated.

"'Now, my love,' said my father, rising and kissing me affectionately, 'I have told you all that passed—it is a painful subject, to which I hope never to have occasion to revert; for how dreadful is it to see a nobleman like Lord Benfield driven into poverty—into crime—almost into madness—by the indulgence of that fatal pas-

sion for gambling, which has been his besetting sin!'

"My father then left the room, and throwing myself into the arms of that beloved being who had watched over every anxious look, I burst into tears. My almost breaking heart was relieved; and as I sobbed upon her bosom, and felt her arms gently pressing me, I ardently wished that I had never kept even a thought from my mother! Yet so saint-like—so free from all the errors of humanity, did she appear, that I knew not how to pour a tale of love and error into her pure ears—it would have seemed a profanation! Yet I longed to confess all—to receive her pity—her pardon—her advice. But as I hung upon her bosom, she said, 'My Emily, your father and I blame ourselves for having allowed you and Horace to be so much together; we ought to have foreseen the probability of your becoming attached to each other—indeed, I will acknowledge, that it did appear to me not unlikely; but I thought, should it prove the case, there would be no obstacle to an union between you—on the contrary, I believed it likely to be approved by the friends of both parties. The result shows that

I erred. Now, my sweet Emily, we must not only give up associating with our young friend, but endeavour to bear the indignity we have received with calmness.'

"Twice I attempted to interrupt her, with the intention of throwing myself upon her love and the tenderness of her nature, for forgiveness, whilst I related the story of our unfortunate marriage: but placing her hands upon my lips, she said, 'Not a word, my Emily; your father has desired me to hear nothing from you—we wish to know nothing of your past thoughts or feelings respecting Horace. All we know is, that from this time we must cease to speak, or even to think of him, if possible.'

"Alas! thus was the confession I was on the point of making checked—I required encouragement, instead of which, I was desired not to speak! The resolution I had with so much difficulty summoned up, was in an instant destroyed—the words died upon my lips—the secret remained locked in my own breast, then and for ever!

"When retired to my apartment, I spent some hours in weeping and lamenting the distressing situation in which I was placed. On this day I expected to have been openly ac-

knowledged as Horace's wife, instead of which an insurmountable barrier was now placed between us, unless Miss Jefferson should marry, or consent to the contract being destroyed, which, from her late conduct, appeared highly improbable; besides which, it was doubtful whether, were her consent gained, Lord Benfield would give his to the destruction of the deed from which he still hoped to extract wealth.

"I suffered so much agitation and uneasiness (notwithstanding that, by the connivance of Morgan, I received one of the kindest and most consolatory letters possible from Horace), that in the course of the following night I was seized with violent shivering-fits, and other symptoms of fever. In a few hours, I became delirious, and during a fortnight my parents watched over my sick bed with little hope of my recovery. I was totally unconscious of all that passed around me, until the crisis of my disorder was over; when, although I ceased to rave, my weakness was so great that I was utterly incapable of moving or speaking. I could not even open my eyes, the lids seemed closed by their own weight. My ears were alone awake to what was passing, and yet I was scarcely able to comprehend what I heard. I felt as if

I had awoke from a long and painful dream. I heard my father's sonorous voice, and my mother's sweet tones, subdued to the lowest whisper, as they thanked Heaven that the awful crisis was passed.

"I knew not at the time how long I remained in this state of half lethargy or stupor; but I afterwards found that several days elapsed from the crisis of my disorder ere I was able to speak—almost to move! Indeed only from my tranquil breathing could those in attendance be assured that I lived. I remember once thinking, 'If this be death, surely there is nothing in it to dread!'

"Once I heard, or fancied I heard, a voice, dearer even than that of my beloved parents, breathing in gentlest accents words of tenderest endearment. I felt the warm and balmy breath—the ardent pressure of the hand—then a kiss imprinted on my cheek.: I heard—I thought I understood it all. Worlds would I have given to have opened my eyes—to have uttered a word—to have returned the pressure of that hand; but so utterly powerless was I, that I could not give the slightest indication that I was aware of the proximity of one so dear. It seemed to me like a sweet dream which I

wished, though vainly, to dream over again. For some days after this, I gained strength, although so slowly, as scarcely to be visible to those around me. At length I was able to speak to that beloved mother, who hung so tenderly, so devotedly over my bed—to thank her for her kindness, and to express my gratitude to both my parents, for their ceaseless care and anxious tenderness. Of Morgan I inquired, whether the visit of Horace was a vision or reality. She assured me it was no dream, as she had herself shown him into my apartment when my parents had retired to rest. Indeed, she acknowledged that this was not the first time she had done so, since he had seen me when my life was almost despaired of, and when my delirium was at its height; which had so serious an effect upon his health, as to confine him to his bed, from which he had risen with difficulty to pay his last nocturnal visit to my chamber—but the knowledge that I was out of danger, had contributed more towards restoring his health than all the physicians could do. Morgan concluded her narrative, by telling me that she still continued to send him daily information respecting my health, as also that my mother frequently

answered his notes of inquiry herself. I was fearful, lest in the delirium of fever, I should have betrayed any circumstance which ought not to have been divulged; but Morgan assuring me, that whilst I raved frequently of Horace, Lord and Lady Benfield, Miss Jefferson, and all connected with them, I never uttered any word which could lead my friends to suspect our marriage. My mind being set at ease in this respect, I requested Morgan to endeavour to see Horace, and to assure him from myself of my convalescence, and my constant and ardent affection, and beg him to guard a life so inestimably dear to me. My faithful servant contrived frequently to see him, and bring me notes replete with every thing kind and affectionate, which ere long I was enabled to reply to, by a few lines.

"When disease takes its flight, youth rapidly regains its strength; and, although the same cause for uneasiness remained, as when I first sunk under it, I now began to view our situation with more composure, and to look forward to a brighter termination to our prospects than I had at that time anticipated. Hope once more animated my spirits, and the cheerful

tone in which Horace wrote to me, buoyed them up still more.

"I had heard from Morgan that all the Benfield family, with the exception of Horace, had left the park a few days after my illness commenced; but that Lady Benfield had expressed a great wish to see me, and was very much distressed on hearing of my alarming state; whilst Sir Edward, she added, had been like a man distracted, and had called at the rectory to inquire after me each day until he left the country.

"From my parents I never heard the name of Benfield—every subject that could lead to a recollection of the family seemed studiously avoided.

"At length I was sufficiently well to remove into my mother's boudoir; and then, as she no longer sat (as I had been accustomed to see her when in my apartment) with her back towards the window, and under the shade of muslin curtains, I beheld with alarm the change which had taken place in her appearance. Her slight and elegant form had become more attenuated; her complexion more brilliantly beautiful, whilst the transparency of her skin was such, that her

small blue veins were almost as distinctly visible as if covered by glass; and her hitherto dove-like eyes, beamed with a bright and sparkling light through the long lashes which overshadowed and softened their brilliancy, whilst they added to their beauty. On first perceiving these fearful symptoms of decline, which were accompanied by that short cough so alarming to those who understand its tendency, I trembled for the life of my beloved mother. I watched her every look and movement, with all the anxiety of the fondest affection, and desirous to know whether my father was under the same apprehension which assailed me, I observed his countenance with earnest attention, and soon perceived in him the same fear which agitated my own bosom. When he thought himself unobserved, he would gaze intently on her beautiful face, then with eyes filled with tears quit the room. We ventured not to name to each other the fears which we mutually laboured under. I was apprehensive of alarming him still more, by appearing to notice what, alas, was but too evident; whilst he equally dreaded, in the debilitated state of my health, saying any thing to alarm me. We soon, however, came to an understanding, and decided to set out

on our intended journey into Devonshire, as soon as I was able to bear the fatigue of travelling.

Horace earnestly entreated to see me prior to my departure. I was equally wishful with himself that we should meet, but knew not how to obtain an interview, as nothing could have induced me to have run the risk of my mother being made uneasy by a knowledge of our intercourse. Morgan, ever kind and indefatigable, again contrived to admit Horace to my mother's boudoir, when my father was engaged by parochial business, and she had retired to her apartment for an hour's repose. Our meeting after so much suffering, may be more easily imagined than described; our parting, although painful, was cheered by the hope that brighter days were yet in store for us, and, since, in the precarious state in which my mother was at that time, we could have taken no step towards our union, we flattered ourselves that whilst waiting for the re-establishment of her health, we might be fortunate enough to overcome, what appeared to be the greatest obstacle to our marriage being acknowledged, by Miss Jefferson making some other choice.

"Youth, ever prone to hope, caused us to

rear our airy castles of happiness, and we assured ourselves that Lord Benfield's threats would not much longer be persisted in, and were only uttered during the first storm of passion at his disappointment.

"With Morgan's assistance we knew we should be enabled to correspond, and in communicating to each other all our hopes and fears, we felt that we should equally derive consolation. Thus feeling, we separated, each heart lightened of great part of its load by mutual participation. The following day we left the rectory for the south of Devon. As we were obliged, both on account of my mother's health and my own, to travel slowly, we were some time in reaching the place of destination, a pretty secluded village, situated in the most beautiful part of the county.

"The mildness of the atmosphere, and change of scene, had a visibly favourable effect upon the health of my mother. With renewed hope in its ultimate restoration—delighted with the exquisite scenery around us, and breathing the soft balmy air, impregnated with the perfume of those beautiful plants, which, though here thriving in great luxuriance, I had, until then, been accustomed to see only in a greenhouse,

I quickly recovered my health, and, to a certain extent, my spirits. I no longer viewed, as I had done immediately prior to my illness, what had passed at Lord Benfield's through the dark medium of despair. On the contrary, every thing around now assumed the tint which my own more exhilarated state of spirits gave to my ideas. The beautiful bloom in my mother's cheeks, I began to flatter myself was the roseate hue of returning health, rather than the hectic of decline. My letters to Horace consequently became so much more cheerful than any I had before written, and so buoyant with hope, that he too caught the infection, and wrote in a happier strain than heretofore. My mother continued to improve in health, during the first few months of our residence in Devonshire. The winter proved so unusually mild, that in that warm though damp climate, we were never confined to the house a single day. As I had my horse with me, I was enabled to see much of the distant and beautiful scenery which the indifferent roads would not permit of being visited in a carriage. The winter thus passed in greater comfort than I had at first dared to expect, but as spring advanced, without apparent cause, my mother's

strength decreased, her short teasing cough became more harassing—the brilliant bloom on her cheeks settled into one bright red spot in the centre—but I will not proceed with the distressing picture—I saw that all prospect of amendment was at an end!—The hope I had so lately cherished—the bright vision which had flitted before my mind's eye of her perfect recovery, made the present reverse more severely felt.

"I perceived that my father had ceased to hope, and without uttering a word to each other, our tearful eyes and anxious countenances expressed our inward suffering more fully than words could have done. From the hour that the conviction of my mother's inevitable fate was felt by me, I would willingly never have left her side; but to that my parents would not assent, insisting, on the contrary, that I should continue my daily exercise on horseback. One day we had returned from our airing, my mother having appeared to enjoy hers, which she took in a close carriage, more than usual, whilst I cantered to and fro near her and my father; when, as we were seated near the open window (the couch on which my mother reclined being drawn towards

it) and admiring the vivid colours of a beautifully setting sun, she gave one deep sigh, her head sunk on her bosom, and her pure spirit took its flight to the realms of everlasting bliss without a struggle!—Thus serenely ended the life of that sweetest, gentlest, best of human beings! Her death, like her life, was so calm and peaceful, that some minutes elapsed, ere we could believe she was no more.

"I must draw a veil over the first acute sufferings of the bereaved husband and child—for what pen can describe the affliction of him, who has lost the beloved partner of all his joys and sorrows during twenty years of sweet companionship! or of that child who has heard the last sigh of a mother! What can convey to an affectionate heart a pang more acute than the death of her who has watched over your infancy—who, in afterlife, has endeavoured to cultivate every good quality in, and eradicate every bad one from, your disposition; who has participated in all your happiness or grief; who has loved you better than all that the world contained. Many ties may be renewed; but when the earth is thrown over a mother's grave, we feel that no future tie can supply her place!

"I recalled to my remembrance every thoughtless act of my life, when her mild reproving eye (for rarely did reproof escape her lips) would recal me to my duty. And, oh, how my heart accused me, as every trivial act of negligence or inattention, assuming now an appearance of crime, rose up before me! Could I have lived over again the eighteen preceding years of my life, I felt that my greatest delight would have been to watch over every look and wish of that dear sainted being who loved me only too well. Then busy memory would revert to the days of childhood; when I had used to hide my little sorrows in her folding arms, or lull my aching head to rest upon her tender bosom.—Yet my grief, though deep, was not altogether selfish. I mourned for my father's loss almost as deeply as for my own. But his was a noble, manly sorrow, befitting alike the Christian and the minister!—It did not bow him to the earth as mine had done—his fine face was pale—his voice, though low, was distinct, and as he addressed to me words of consolation, derived from that source of comfort open to all, the quivering of his lip alone marked his internal suffering.

"During all the affliction of this period, I was thankful that I had not given my beloved mother the pain of knowing, that the child whom she so fondly loved, had been so culpable, as to enter into a clandestine union—she died under the belief that I was faultless as her tenderest affection could desire!

"I will not attempt to portray our feelings, on returning to that home, in which so many happy years had been passed—where every object, animate and inanimate, external and internal, reminded us only more keenly of the extent of our loss.

"One month had elapsed from the day on which the remains of my lamented mother were consigned to the tomb, when I first perceived, that in addition to the ravages which grief had made in my father's face, there were symptoms of his having imbibed the fatal disorder, which had already so cruelly deprived me of one parent. I earnestly besought him to remove without delay into Italy, the mild and genial climate of which country, might, I hoped, not only check the progress of that frightful, yet deceptive complaint, but the change of scene might, I thought, be of service to his spirits.

"My father anxiously strove to remove my alarm; smiling at the fear I expressed at symptoms which, he said, arose from a slight cold alone; and assuring me he should not be so well any where, as at his own beloved home, where every object was endeared to him doubly by the remembrance of her whom he had lost. 'Fear not for me, my Emily,' he said, 'believe me, I will take every possible care of myself; for your sake, my child, I should wish to preserve my life, were it not otherwise a matter of duty; but,' seeing me still weeping, he continued, 'if it will be any relief to you, I will see our excellent friend, Dr. Jones, and promise to abide by his decision.'

"This was all I could require or wish, since the person named by my father, was not only a man of great talent and celebrity, but had been particularly successful in his treatment of pulmonary cases. The following day he arrived, and after being some time with my father, begged me not to feel uneasy, as seeing me well, and as cheerful as, under the circumstance of our late severe affliction, could be expected, would be of more essential service to his health, than the advice of all the faculty, or any change of climate.

"Dr. Jones, by the cheerfulness of his manner, removed great part of my apprehension; yet when I afterwards called to mind what had passed, I found that it was from that circumstance alone, I could extract comfort, as his words were not of a nature to allay my fears; but since he had told me, that on me depended, in a great degree, the improvement of my father's health and spirits, I determined that nothing on my part should be left undone, to promote so desirable a result.

"I have before alluded to the many admirable qualifications of Mrs. Edmonds, the lady with whom I had been placed to receive instruction, but I have not stated the fact, that I loved her more sincerely and devotedly, than any other individual, with the exception of my parents, until I became acquainted with the Benfield family. She was so kind, so amiable, so highly talented, so superior to almost every other person, that to know her, and not to love her, was impossible. She honoured me with her affection when under her roof, and ever afterwards continued towards me almost the love of a parent. She was a gentlewoman by birth and education, and early in life married to a military man, who barely lived to attain the

rank of lieutenant-colonel, and then dying, left her without any provision, except her pension. Thus left in the prime of life, she wisely determined, rather to devote talents and accomplishments of a more than ordinary description, to a useful purpose, and thus earn an independence for herself, than submit to the obligation of an annuity from her more wealthy relatives.

"She had no sooner made known her intention of taking pupils, than she received numerous applications from the parents and guardians of young persons of rank and fortune, for the value of such a preceptress was fully appreciated by all who knew her. As she was partial to the society of young people, she did not find the task she had undertaken a painful one, until the last half-year that I was with her; when a violent rheumatic fever left her so infirm, that she resolved to give up taking pupils, and to sink her property for an annuity, since she found that it would be abundantly sufficient for all her wants, and her relations were in such affluence as not to require aid from her.

"Mrs. Edmonds put her plan in execution shortly after I left her protection, and not long afterwards spent several weeks at the rectory.

Indeed, she had paid my parents more than one visit, during the time I was with her, at the vacations, when they became nearly as partial to her as myself.' My father knowing, and fully appreciating her character, now proposed that I should endeavour to prevail upon her to spend some time with me, as he thought the society of this estimable woman would, in this time of affliction, be peculiarly pleasing to me. With a heart ever open to the claims of friendship, she immediately joined us.

"Although our meeting was painful, I found, after the first burst of emotion, my mind relieved by having so valued a friend with me—one who could pity and feel for the weakness of human nature, although herself almost free from its frailties. As the violence of my affliction for the loss we had sustained abated, I again felt keenly the situation in which Horace and myself were placed. Truly is it said, 'that the greater trouble swallows up the lesser;' for during the early period of my grief for the death of my dear mother, I had little or no anxiety to bestow upon myself.

"Horace wrote to me constantly under cover to Morgan. He had participated in all my sorrow; and now that time had in some degree

ameliorated it, he besought me to grant him an interview. I represented to him the utter impossibility of doing so without discovery, and that I would not at that period run such a risk, even to please one so dear to me as himself, since I knew that such a circumstance would greatly add to my father's sufferings. Horace was far from satisfied by my refusal of his request, and continued to urge me, not only by my affection towards himself, but by the sacred name of wife, to comply with his wishes—to hear what he had to say—and then to separate my fate and fortunes from his, if I wished it, since I was under age, and consequently could not be legally bound to him, without the consent of my parents; but, for his own part, he must ever consider himself my lawful husband, and death would be to him most welcome when he had no longer the hope of sharing life with me.

"The warmth and earnestness of Horace's letters, added to a certain degree of melancholy which breathed in every line, increased my uneasiness and anxiety so much, that I became silent and abstracted. Frequently, on rousing from a long revery, I found the eyes of my kind

friend fixed upon me, with an appearance of deep interest. She exerted her varied talents for my amusement—urged me to ride on horseback—drive out—work in my flower-garden—visit the poor cottagers. All this, and every thing she proposed I acceded to; but I did so like an automaton, for my thoughts were otherwise employed. I was conscious of my own abstraction, and strove to shake it off in vain. Horace, dejected—unhappy—wishing for death—was ever before me; and I, who would gladly have resigned my own life to save his, was the cause! This idea pursued me night and day—I could not fly from it—it was present to my mind's eye at all times!

"At this period I saw little of my father; he was, he said, much occupied by parochial and other affairs of importance. He breakfasted alone, but spent the evening with us, when he appeared in so much better spirits than I had seen him for some time prior to my mother's death, that I almost ceased to feel apprehensive on his account. But upon one occasion I was suddenly struck by an appearance of feebleness in his manner of walking; and on observing it to Mrs. Edmonds, I was equally grieved

and alarmed to perceive that she was of the same opinion, though she did not altogether avow it to me.

"I now became thoroughly uneasy, and anxious respecting him, and watched his every look with the most earnest solicitude. He refused every entreaty of mine to be his companion during the morning, whilst in an evening his flow of spirits appeared rather to increase than abate. But with agony I beheld that each day his cheeks became more hollow, and tinged with a deeper colour; whilst his step became less firm, until he ceased to take any exercise, except in a close carriage, where he never suffered me to be his companion, saying cheerfully, that it was a mode of conveyance more suited to Mrs. Edmonds and himself than me, and that I must pursue my plan of daily riding on horseback, as more fitting for my age. With regret I obeyed his wishes, for I felt every hour that I was debarred his company—a severe privation, since I could not but apprehend the time was rapidly approaching when I should be deprived of it altogether.

"Not to linger unnecessarily upon this painful period, I will merely state the melancholy fact, that my dear father followed his loved

partner within four months of her decease! Then did I truly feel myself bereaved, and but for the presence and support of Mrs. Edmonds, should have utterly sunk under this severe blow, following as it did so rapidly upon the death of my mother! . . . . . .

"From Mrs. Edmonds I understood that my father had long been aware of his situation; and that the conviction that he had imbibed the direful complaint of her whom he had unceasingly attended, had, even prior to her death, been such, as to cause him to urge my being out much in the open air when in Devonshire, and had likewise been his reason for absenting himself so much from me afterwards, since he hoped by so doing I might escape uninjured. His apparently great flow of spirits I found had been in part caused by fever, though in some degree they were assumed to lull my fears to rest.

"Not many days after the last melancholy event had taken place, when seated alone, Morgan informed me that Mr. Benfield had arrived—scarcely had she named him ere he entered the apartment. It was a moment of agitation not to be described; all I had suffered since last we parted appeared again most

vividly before me; yet joy at once more seeing one so tenderly loved, mixed with the sorrow with which I was overwhelmed. Such scenes do not admit of description. A feeling heart will understand what must have been the sensations of mine; an unfeeling one could neither sympathize with, nor comprehend them.

"Horace's connexion with myself being still unknown to Mrs. Edmonds, of course he could not at such a period he received as a guest; notwithstanding the ostensible cause of his arrival was to attend my father's funeral, which was to take place on the day following, and was sufficient to account for his having been at the rectory, whence he proceeded to the park, as his home during his stay.

"On entering the drawing-room, I thought my kind friend viewed me with a displeased and inquiring eye, and, blushing deeply, I took my seat in silence. She then said, coldly,

"'You have had a visiter, I find, Emily.'

"'Yes,' I replied, in confusion; 'Mr. Benfield has been here.'

"'You objected, and I was not surprised at it, to seeing Mr. Marsden, although he was your father's old friend and trustee, and is one of your guardians; yet you receive Mr. Ben-

field (a young unmarried man, whom your parents wished you no more to see) in your boudoir, and remain with him alone during two hours. Is this, Emily, consistent? Is it as the daughter of Mrs. Seymour—as the pupil and beloved friend of myself, ought to act?'

"I deeply felt the reproof, and in tears replied, 'I am infinitely more culpable than you can imagine; but I am *very, very* miserable, and when I tell you all I have done, I know that, however severely you may blame me, you will still pity the culprit who throws herself upon your compassion.'

"'It may be so, Emily,—the wound must be bared—perhaps, probed, ere it can be healed; be open and ingenuous as is your nature, and I may be able to aid you with my counsel.'

"'Bear with me a little longer, my friend, and then you shall know every thought of one who loves and reveres you as a second mother.'

"I now took courage to say that Mr. Benfield had come with an intention of paying a last tribute of respect to the memory of my father, by attending his remains to the grave as a chief mourner.

"'To this,' replied Mrs. Edmonds, "I see

no objection; for your father was much attached to him; and as you have no near relatives, the eldest son of Lord Benfield is the most proper person to accompany Mr. Marsden on this melancholy occasion.'

"I was thankful that this proposal met my friend's approbation, as it would be some relief to both Horace and myself, to feel that he had paid such respect, as would be due from a son-in-law, to the remains of my beloved father.

"For several days after this, I was confined to my bed by illness. When able to leave my room, Horace entreated, through the medium of Morgan, to be again admitted to visit me; but I begged him not to urge me to do so, until I had acquired resolution to inform my friend of the peculiar situation in which, through my own imprudence, I was placed. The following day I resolved to enter into the explanation I had promised—accordingly I advanced to meet her with Horace's note in my hand—with a faltering tongue, I said, 'Mr. Benfield wishes to be admitted to see us.'

"Mrs. Edmonds made no reply. I raised my eyes to hers, and saw them earnestly fixed

upon my countenance. I again made an effort to speak, but failing in the attempt, burst into tears, and threw myself into her arms, where I sobbed out, 'I know not how to tell you, but Horace is——' I stopped, unable to utter more.

"'Horace is your husband; I know all you would say, Emily; Mr. Benfield has this moment quitted me, after informing me of the imprudent step which he had prevailed upon you to take, and for which he blames himself severely, since it has caused you so much pain; in your present delicate state of health, and suffering under recent and severe domestic affliction, I will not say how deeply you have disappointed me. The bruised reed I wish not to crush. You are, my poor child, surrounded by difficulties, from which I know not how you can be extricated; but all that a kind and indulgent friend can do to obviate them shall be done.'

"I wept my grateful thanks in utter humiliation of spirit—for the pity and affection which would not chide, yet conveyed the severest reproof to me.

"From this period, Horace was admitted as

a frequent visiter, sometimes seeing me alone, at other times with Mrs. Edmonds, until that kind friend thought it desirable he should quit Benfield, as his visits would probably draw upon me the remarks of the neighbourhood; to this he immediately acceded, as Mrs. Edmonds promised to receive him at Beech Grove, where we purposed going, as soon as every arrangement should be concluded with the new incumbent.

"At this period, Mr. Marsden, who had quitted Benfield immediately after the interment of my lamented father, returned, as he said, in the hope of prevailing upon me to accompany him home, stating that he knew such to have been his friend's desire. I expressed my gratitude to him and Mrs. Marsden for their kindness in proposing to receive me, at the same time that I informed him, it was my intention to take up my abode with Mrs. Edmonds in consequence of my father having made an arrangement to that effect.

"Mr. Marsden exhibited considerable surprise and disappointment at this announcement, and continued to urge me to make Marsden House my home; until I was compelled to show a letter, written by my dear father, to

myself, in which he recommended me to reside with Mrs. Edmonds, since she had kindly consented to receive me.

"Mr. Marsden then proposed, that the money which was to be paid by the new incumbent, should, with a considerable sum which was in the banker's hands, be placed by him, with the other part of my fortune, in the funds. But to this Mrs. Edmonds replied, that as my father had appointed her sole executrix, and a joint guardian with him and Colonel Hartington, she should place this sum in her own name, as the age at which I was to be put in possession of my property would be attained by me, ere the twelve months appointed for closing the executorship accounts would elapse. Mr. Marsden received this intimation with ill-disguised anger, and let fall, to the great surprise of Mrs. Edmonds, some words intimating a supposition on his part, that she expressed her intention to act thus, in consequence of want of confidence in his honour. My amiable friend replied only by a look of great astonishment, and then endeavoured to change the subject. When Mr. Marsden found that all his efforts to prevail upon me to accompany him were quite unavailing, he left us in extreme displeasure,

which, as I knew my father felt a great regard for him, was to me a subject of sincere regret.

"The intimacy between my father and Mr. Marsden, had originated at Oxford, where the latter was, from his great natural talents, aided by considerable learning, officiating as a private tutor to some young noblemen, when my father arrived at the same college, where an apparent similarity of talent and disposition, attracted them towards each other. My father being so much younger than Mr. Marsden, felt highly flattered by his preference; and, when he found that the whole of the small patrimony of the former had been expended on his education, rejoiced in every opportunity which occurred of conferring any little benefit upon him, though it was only with extreme difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to accept the slightest favour.

"At the time of my father's marriage, Mr. Marsden was paying great attention to a lady of very large fortune, with whom he had been but a short time acquainted; notwithstanding which, he had most kindly, I have heard my parents say, left his matrimonial scheme in a very unsatisfactory state, to attend the nuptials of his friend, and to undertake the manage-

ment of the pecuniary affairs of my father and mother, since he and Colonel Hartington were appointed sole trustees in their marriage settlements, and the colonel being then abroad, the whole business had devolved upon him.

"Not long afterwards, Mr. Marsden informed his friend that he had been fortunate enough to succeed in the most anxious wish of his heart, and that he should soon follow his example, and he trusted be equally happy in his wedded life. From this period, Mr. Marsden and my father kept up the intimacy of their early years, constantly corresponding, and occasionally exchanging visits; but Mr. and Mrs. Marsden were much oftener visiters at Benfield, than my parents were at Marsden, since my father had the charge of a large parish, which he seldom quitted, whilst his friend was totally free from professional employment.

"During Mr. Marsden's frequent visits at Benfield, he always appeared, when in company, to take a peculiar interest in me, and never failed to bring with him such presents as were likely to obtain the gratitude and admiration of a child. As I became older these presents became of a more costly description, and were frequently in the shape of such elegant *bijou-*

terie as my parents strongly objected to my receiving; yet my acceptance was urged in such a way, and the little value of, what he termed, the trifles offered, set forth in such strong terms, that they were generally obliged to assent to their friend's generosity.

"Such conduct in Mr. Marsden could scarcely fail of making an agreeable impression on the mind of a child; but it is somewhat extraordinary, that at the very time I gazed on the beautiful toys with delight, I felt a powerful prejudice against the donor, which was but too visible, and which no efforts of his could overcome. As I advanced towards womanhood, my dislike to Mr. Marsden increased; in his presence I felt less at ease, than in that of any of our numerous friends, notwithstanding all others seemed amused and interested by his varied and talented conversation. He seemed to me to be always acting a part. Whether that idea originated in some faint recollection of his having, in the days of my childhood, taken infinite pains to ingratiate himself with me, when in the presence of my parents, whilst he utterly neglected me when they were not by to see his attentions, I know not; for children at a very tender age observe, and in after years

call to their remembrance many circumstances, which those around them think them incapable of perceiving.

"Although, from respect to my dear father, I had endeavoured to make my unconquérable dislike to his friend as little visible as possible, he was sufficiently aware of it to guard against my having to make Mr. Marsden's house my home, at the same time that he would not pain that gentleman, by removing him from a temporary guardianship of my person and property; since the friends had, in early life, mutually agreed to become guardians to the children of each other; but this term my father had kindly determined to render as short as possible, in consideration to my feelings, by fixing upon my becoming possessed of my fortune at the age of nineteen.

"When the moment arrived in which I was to bid farewell to the place of my birth—where I had passed so many happy years,—and where were interred the remains of my beloved parents, it was indeed a painful one!

"I wept not alone, for the carriage was surrounded by my humble, but kind-hearted friends, many of whom shed tears as the last of that family whom they had equally loved and re-

spected left them, whilst others invoked blessings on my head. The gratitude and affection of these persons, who had known me from my birth, soothed while it affected my feelings; and able only to wave my hand in reply, I sunk back in the carriage overpowered with emotion.

"Immediately on our arrival at Beech Grove, we were visited by Horace, who strongly urged me to consent to our public union at the expiration of three months from the death of my father; at the same time that he was compelled to admit, that there was little probability of Miss Jefferson resigning the contract with Lord Benfield, since she had more than once declared her determination to remain single, and to demand from his lordship the forfeited hundred thousand pounds, whenever his son should take any bride but herself.

"'Have you, then, Horace,' said I, 'forgotten Lord Benfield's dreadful threat?'

"'No, my Emily,' he replied, in mournful accents, 'I have not forgotten it—that horrible threat pursues me every where. In company or alone, I still seem to hear the direful words uttered by my father.'

"'And yet,' said I, shuddering, 'you would brave that menace and avow our union?'

"'Emily, you are my own wedded wife—I have sworn at the altar to cherish and protect you; and although from the circumstance of your being under age, *you* are not *legally* bound to me, I am, by the laws of God and man, your husband. Had that terrible scene between my father and self taken place prior to our secret union, I durst not have urged you to become mine; but unless you cast me off, and thus drive me to misery—to despair, I feel that I can no longer, without a positive dereliction of duty, refrain from becoming avowedly your companion — your protector — your acknowledged husband.'

"As Horace thus addressed me, the dreadful picture of Lord Benfield, driven by our marriage to commit suicide, arose in all its terrors before my mental vision; and I burst into tears, whilst Horace vainly strove to console me. At length, becoming more composed, I promised to be guided by the counsel of Mrs. Edmonds, to whose decision he was obliged to submit. This excellent woman, having listened to all that Horace could urge in favour of his wishes, at the same time that he admitted his fear lest his father should put his threat in execution, gave it as her opinion that we should be remarried

by bans; after which, we should retire into Switzerland, and there live in privacy until either Miss Jefferson was inclined herself to marry, in which case she would gladly consent to destroy the contract; or some change in the disposition of the parties might enable us to avow our marriage.

"Whether this opinion was given entirely in accordance with her own judgment, or principally in the hope of contributing to the restoration of my health and spirits, which had suffered materially from such continued anxiety, I know not. Mrs. Edmonds recommended us to postpone the ceremony for six months, when I should have attained the age at which, by my father's will, I was to take possession of my property; but as Horace had succeeded in overcoming more powerful obstacles, he ventured to oppose this proposition, saying, that by having the settlements made in such a way that Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison, as trustees, were enabled to receive my fortune, and having a separate deed executed, as an authority for the payment of it to them, prior to my marriage, all difficulties on that score would be avoided. I had already conceded too much to withstand his entreaties, that our marriage by bans should

take place as soon as the necessary deeds could be prepared with all due secrecy.

"When the necessary arrangements previous to our marriage were completed, Mrs. Edmonds and myself went into lodgings, in a part of London remote from all we had known, or to which we had been accustomed; it was therefore to us what we desired, a place of peculiar privacy.

"Horace at the same time took up his abode in a distant county, where he remained during the time the bans were published, at the termination of which period our reunion took place in London; Mr. Morrison acting as father, Mrs. Edmonds, Morgan, and the clerk, forming the only witnesses.

"Our names were simply registered as Horace Benfield and Emily Seymour, whilst in our plain dresses, without equipage or attendants, the officiating minister little surmised that he had joined the hands of the heir of one of the most ancient of the English nobility, and a young lady, who the preceding year was considered a star of the first magnitude in the hemisphere of fashion!

"Immediately after the ceremony we proceeded to our lodgings, whence, after bidding

adieu to my dear second parent, we set out in a postchaise, attended only by Morgan, for Southampton; on our arrival at which place, we were fortunate enough to find a packet on the point of starting for Havre, in which we embarked. Our voyage was prosperous, and the weather delightful. Every thing seemed propitious; for although the packet was full, there was no individual whom we had ever seen, therefore we felt no apprehension of being recognised: notwithstanding which, however, we thought it more prudent to proceed immediately from Havre, and to stop only at the most unfrequented places in our route, avoiding, even by going considerably out of our way, those places in which the English usually congregate; whilst we frequently took up our abode for several days in such retired situations as had any beauty of scenery to induce us to remain. We were so happy in the society of each other. that every thing we viewed seemed tinged by the brilliant colours which our own feelings spread around us.

"Thus did three months pass rapidly and agreeably, during which we heard many times from Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison; the former of whom stated that she answered all

inquiries respecting me, by saying that I had accompanied a friend of hers to the continent, in hopes that change of air might prove beneficial to my health and spirits.

"Prior to quitting England, we had purposed residing in Switzerland, and were confirmed in this plan by accidentally meeting with a residence exactly calculated for us. It was a pretty cottage, situated in a beautiful little sequestered glen, above which a range of lofty mountains towered in awful grandeur. This secluded vale was remote from any place to which travellers were in the habit of resorting, and was only made known to us by our perceiving a paper affixed to a small inn, ten miles distant, in which the cottage was offered for sale. The road we found very indifferent, but in every other respect it was so exactly suited to our wishes, that we hesitated not a day in becoming the purchasers of this enchanting little spot.

"The last occupant was an Englishwoman of rank, who, in a fit of enthusiasm, had vowed to live and die amid the picturesque scenery of Switzerland: but after a residence of two years, during which time her mind had been employed and amused by improving the beauty of her cottage and garden, she became weary of the

seclusion which she had at first so anxiously desired, and returning to the gay world to talk of the beauties and delights of her Swiss paradise, she gladly resigned it to the care of the *curé* of the parish, who had kindly undertaken to endeavour to dispose of it for her. Under these circumstances, terms were easily agreed upon, since the owner was as eager to part with her formerly coveted abode, as we could possibly be to become its purchasers. We found our new residence abundantly supplied with all the conveniences, and many of the elegances of life, and were in a few days comfortably settled in this peaceful retreat, where we led a life of primeval simplicity. My little domestic arrangements, and pretty flower-garden, formed my amusement, when my husband rambled too far for me to accompany him; but generally I was his companion in his excursions, since we were provided with surefooted mules, on which we could scramble over the mountains in perfect safety. From Geneva we received musical instruments, books, and drawing implements; and Horace ordered from London most of the new works of any celebrity which might come out.

"Thus provided with ample store of amuse-

ment, and happy in each other, we had not a wish for general society. With tranquillity of mind, all that buoyancy of spirit natural to me had returned, and every appearance of weakness or attenuation had left my frame. Horace, too, no longer thin, pale, and dejected, his fine form having gained the fulness of manhood, and his handsome features restored to even more than their former happy expression, seemed almost to tread on air. These were indeed halcyon days!

"We had not been many months in Switzerland, when we found one evening on our return from a walk, letters waiting our arrival from Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison. I eagerly seized the letter of the former, from whom I had been expecting to hear during the last two or three weeks; ere I had reached its conclusion, it fell from my hand, and Horace, turning towards me, was alarmed by the expression of my countenance.

"'My Emily,' said he, 'are you ill?—or is Mrs. Edmonds so?'

"I replied only by pointing to the letter, which was lying at my feet. The intelligence it conveyed, and at which Mr. Morrison's letter, as far as Horace had yet read, only hinted, was

indeed distressing, and fell upon me with peculiar force, from not having even supposed the possibility of such an event.

"In consequence of our union having taken place without the knowledge of my father's trustees, my property (although secured by settlement, as far as parchment could secure it) had necessarily still remained in their hands; but as the period was not far distant, when by my father's will I was to be placed in unrestrained possession of my fortune, I had executed a deed prior to my marriage, empowering Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison to receive it, they being the sole trustees appointed by Horace and myself in our marriage settlements. The letter which had so much distressed me was as follows:

"'As the time had nearly arrived when it was requisite that Mr. Morrison and myself should receive your fortune from your father's trustees, we wrote to inform them we were empowered so to do; in consequence of which, Colonel Hartington called upon me, and said that he should be happy to meet the parties at my house any day that might be fixed upon, for transacting the business, of which, never having been required to take an active part, he

knew but little. A day was consequently fixed, when the gentlemen met at Beech Grove, with the exception of Mr. Marsden, who sent an excuse on the score of indisposition, but appointed a distant day for the fulfilment of his engagement, when he hoped to be quite recovered.

"'Ere that day arrived, Mr. Marsden a second time excused himself, on the plea of urgent and unexpected business calling him elsewhere. Again a day was fixed, and again an excuse was sent. In short, after appointing numerous periods for the settlement of your affairs, we all began to be apprehensive that Mr. Marsden might have involved himself in some pecuniary difficulties, which he had suffered to interfere with your property. We then made inquiries, and heard that until lately he had paid all his tradesmen's bills regularly; but that he was now considerably in debt in his own neighbourhood, in which it was given out that his only son was on the point of marriage with his ward, a young lady in possession of a hundred thousand pounds, when all his debts would be discharged! This recalled to my remembrance Mr. Seymour having once said, that he felt some surprise at the very expensive style in which Mr. Marsden lived; and likewise the ex-

treme anxiety that gentleman showed, that you should make his house your home, as well as to receive those few thousand pounds of yours, which were in my hands, and I began to feel apprehensive for the safety of your fortune.

"'I trust you are now, my dearest Emily, in some degree prepared for the distressing tidings which I am compelled to send you—I am indeed afraid that all is gone! After receiving the information I have given you, Colonel Hartington and Mr. Morrison proceeded to Mr. Marsden's country residence, accompanied by their solicitor. They found that gentleman at home, and immediately required an account of your property (forty-five thousand pounds); at the same time informing him, that the powers of attorney for the sale of the stock must instantly be signed. To this Mr. Marsden readily acceded, although not without expressing great indignation at their suspecting his integrity; but he should, he said, soon prove to them, that he had regarded Miss Seymour's interest even more than his own.

"'Immediately after putting his signature to the powers of attorney, he left them, in search of some accounts, which, he said, he purposed placing before them, since they doubted his

word. The gentlemen awaited Mr. Marsden's return for nearly half an hour in vain, when their patience being exhausted, they rang for a servant, and inquired where Mr. Marsden was; to which the man replied, his master was gone out on horseback. In utter astonishment, the gentlemen asked several further questions, when they found that he had mounted his fleetest hunter, and ridden off no one knew whither! Apprehending that he might arrive in London before them, they proceeded as rapidly as four horses could draw them to town, when they immediately applied respecting your stock; but, alas! it proved worse than they had even anticipated, for not a shilling was in the name of the trustees!

"'It appeared, on reference to the old books at the Stock Exchange, that at the time of your father's marriage, forty-five thousand pounds had been placed in the funds, in the name of Marsden *only*, the last of which had been sold out two years before! Colonel Hartington and Mr. Morrison then went to your father's banker, to inquire whence he had received the dividends; and were there told, that each half-year, as they became due, Mr. Marsden himself had paid them into the bank. In short, my beloved Emily, there

is no doubt that Mr. Marsden has spent the whole sum intrusted to him by your unsuspecting parents, and that he is now on his road to America, where it is useless to pursue him. Indeed, had he not left England, little good could have been done, since he has no property left, except what is in settlement on his wife, the income of which is seized by the creditors, and which may in time cause a payment of sixpence in the pound! Yet this man, villain as he is, will escape the punishment he so justly deserves, since he has *only* been guilty of a breach of trust—a crime which the law scarcely recognises as such! Surely this artful, smiling robber, is equally deserving the gallows with the poor, ignorant, perhaps starving wretch, whose temptation has been so much greater. What elegant presents did he not bring you, when a child. Well might he spare a few pounds, from so many thousands of which he was defrauding you!'

"Such was the substance of that part of my kind friend's letter, which related to this distressing and nefarious transaction. Mr. Morrison's letter to Horace contained similar information, though without entering so fully

into the *minutiæ* of the business as Mrs. Edmonds.

"Not to have been distressed at the receipt of such intelligence, would have been highly unnatural. The blow fell upon me with double violence; for hitherto I had thought, that, although my fortune would bear no competition with that of Miss Jefferson, it was sufficient to more than defray any additional expense, which a wife must necessarily entail, as likewise eventually to form some provision for a family. Every hope of the kind was now destroyed, and I felt myself an incumbrance, in a pecuniary point of view, where I had flattered myself with being an assistance!

"As such painful thoughts arose, tears of regret and mortification streamed down my cheeks. In vain did my beloved husband press me to his heart, saying, 'Look around, my Emily, and see how little is necessary for happiness. My income is still more than sufficient to support us in every comfort where we now are; here we will continue to live, and love, during the life of my father; and when, by its termination, we are called from this peaceful retreat, to take up our abode at Benfield Park,

which must eventually be mine, though we may not be able to keep up any great dignity as a viscount and viscountess, we will do more; for we will live as an English country gentleman and his wife ought to live—educating and bringing up our children in the fear of God, and love towards their fellow-creatures—setting an example to those whom Providence may have placed beneath us, of prudence and economy—assisting those who from poverty or sickness may require our aid—and associating on terms of equality with such of our neighbours as are likely to prove agreeable to us, many of whom we already know to be so. Will not such a picture, my sweet Emily, realize all our fondest hopes? Perhaps, under other circumstances, I might, in the pride of my heart, wish to display the beauty of my wife in more splendid scenes; but I will endeavour to think it is better we should not be placed in temptation, by reflecting upon the effect which the homage and adulation of the world have had upon a being so highly gifted as my mother, and likewise upon the dreadful influence which gaming has gained over my father's better feelings.'

"'But you, dearest Horace, would never

be in danger from that or any other vicious propensity.'

"'Your kind partiality, my Emily, leads you to think so, and I hope you are not mistaken; but since a life of seclusion is likely to be ours, it is desirable that we should feel all its advantages.'

"I now asked Horace why he spoke in those terms of Lady Benfield; for although I had seen with deep regret, that there was not that affection between the mother and son that might have been wished, I had never seen or heard any thing to her prejudice, beyond the circumstance of her wishing for Horace's marriage with Miss Jefferson, which I considered very excusable in her ladyship, since that young lady's immense wealth would have removed all the pecuniary difficulties of the family.

"'I have frequently, my love,' replied he, 'wished to give you some insight into the real character of Lady Benfield; but it is so repugnant to the feelings of a son, to expose the frailties of a parent, that whenever I have attempted to raise the veil, so skilfully thrown over them, some simple remark of yours has instantly caused me to let it fall. Mr. and Mrs. Seymour knew my mother intimately prior to

her marriage, but as they appeared to have no suspicion that her gentle and seductive manners were artificial, I presume that it was in her intercourse with the gay world, that her passions gained that strength, which her principles appear to have lost.'

"'I have,' said I, 'heard my mother say, that in early life Lady Benfield was much to be pitied, as she was the only child of a widowed father, who thought that he could in no way show his affection for his wife's memory so well, as by unlimited indulgence to his daughter. To this my mother added, that she was happy to perceive that her ladyship's excellent sense had enabled her to overcome those disadvantages in her early education.'

"'I fear, Emily, that Lady Benfield learnt rather to conceal, than to subdue her passions; at least such I have ever had reason to believe. My mother never loved me; why, I know not, unless it were, that from my earliest childhood, I evinced a strong dislike to every kind of artifice; Frederick, on the contrary, gloried in deceit, and consequently became the favourite of both my parents. Kindness I scarcely knew when at home, except from the servants: therefore, as I became older, I gladly accepted the

invitations of my schoolfellows, more particularly Morrison, to visit them during the vacations. The only entire vacation that I spent with my parents for several years, was the Easter prior to my going to college; I then for the first time became aware, that whilst my father gambled deeply, my mother frequently played for sums far beyond what prudence or propriety would dictate. I once ventured to hint, that I feared she would feel the inconvenience of such losses, when she burst into such a paroxysm of passion, as I had seldom seen equalled. From that hour I became hateful in her eyes; and consequently, I found it so unpleasant being with my family, that I returned to them no more, until the summer I first knew you, when Lord Benfield particularly wished for my attendance. In addition to other sources of uneasiness, during my childhood and youth, I had, when at home, been much annoyed by having Miss Jefferson pointed out as my future wife. By absenting myself from them, I avoided this, and many other unpleasant circumstances. But I have now said enough, I think, my Emily, to convince you that we can live as respectably, as happily, and as usefully, to ourselves and

others, in the retirement of the country; where we can still have many of the elegances of life, as in the midst of gaiety and splendour.'

"This slight sketch of the real character of a person, whom I had loved and admired so enthusiastically, had the effect Horace intended, of drawing my thoughts from our present distressing loss of fortune. Happy in each other, and finding that my husband scarcely suffered the intelligence we had received from England to give him a moment's uneasiness, still blessed with a sufficient competence, for living where, and as we did, 'the world forgetting—by the world forgot,' our days were, as heretofore, days of happiness and affection.

"We had not long been apprized of the loss of my fortune, ere an event occurred, to which I had looked forward with all the apprehension natural to a young wife, and I became the mother of a lovely boy. If our hours passed swiftly and delightfully before this period, how much more did they do so now! With what pleasure did we mark each beauteous feature in the infant's face; Horace daily fancying he discovered some more striking resemblance to myself; and I, that his nose—his eyes—his mouth, were each the counterpart of his father's.

Yet sometimes, as I gazed upon my child, tears would start into my eyes, at the recollection of how much his worldly prospects were injured by the vicious and fraudulent conduct of those, who ought to have been his friends and protectors.

"Such thoughts and feelings were but evanescent, scarcely deserving to be named by one who had so many sources of felicity. Even now, the recollection of those happy days comes o'er me like some pleasing dream, which lulls my mournful thoughts to rest; and though I have since drunk the cup of sorrow to its bitterest dregs, I still feel that I *have* been supremely happy!

"Two years had elapsed from the period of our quitting England, when Mr. Morrison wrote to urge Horace to return to his native country without delay; since he not only wished to consult him with regard to what steps it might be advisable to pursue respecting Mr. Marsden, whom he had been informed had returned to England, but it likewise appeared requisite, that he should be known and seen amongst his old friends, as there was every reason to apprehend that there was some deep-laid scheme in agitation; since a report was

very generally prevalent, that Horace, after having seduced a young lady of fortune from her family and friends, and living with her some time abroad, had there died.

"'I have contradicted this report most strongly,' continued Mr. Morrison; 'but since there is only my bare word to set against the doubts—and fears—and apprehensions, of your father, mother, and Frederick, who say they never hear either from or of you, my asseverations gain little credence, except amongst a few of my own immediate friends. Come then, dear Benfield, and prove that you are still alive—still able to defend your own reputation, and no one will dare to assail it. These reports, I have reason to believe, originate with those who ought to be the most anxious that they should prove untrue; and having that opinion of Frederick, which his disposition as a boy caused me to form, I do not doubt that he has some artful plan in view for his own benefit, though what that can be, it is difficult to surmise. Rumour says, your brother—I can scarcely bear to call him such, is soon to be united to Miss Jefferson, and her unbounded wealth! May the report prove true; there will then no longer be a necessity for you and

your amiable wife to be exiles from your native country.'

"This letter of Mr. Morrison's put an end to our dream of happiness; as Horace thought it advisable to comply with its suggestion, with as little delay as possible. 'I could,' said he, 'without regret, resign the title to Frederick, and live and die here without wishing for other happiness or distinction, beyond that of being your husband; but I must not neglect the interests of our boy; he is heir to an ancient title, of which his father must not, cannot deprive him.'

"I could not then understand by what possible means it could be wrested from him. Alas! I little knew the villany of those with whom we had to cope.

"'I am deeply grieved, my Emily, to be obliged to acknowledge, that I have no dependence on the principles of those who are so nearly allied to me in blood. The finer feelings of my parents, have long been blunted by the career of dissipation they have run; and Frederick would, I fear, have recourse to any artifice, by which he could possess himself of the birthright of a brother whom he detests!'

"As Horace thus spoke, his fine eyes filled

with tears, and he turned from me to hide his emotion. 'Surely,' said I, 'Frederick cannot be so worthless as you apprehend; or should he be capable of such conduct, I see not the possibility of his succeeding in any plan of aggrandizement he might form, in consequence of your present seclusion.'

" 'If my life be spared, I do not think it possible he can injure us; but should I be removed, and life, my Emily, is we know uncertain, I then dread to think what might be the fate of yourself and our child. Yet perhaps,' seeing me in tears, 'this report is only encouraged in the hope of prevailing upon Miss Jefferson to become his; for you know,' added he, smiling, 'she seemed resolved to be Viscountess Bentield.'

" Mr. Morrison having urged Horace's return to England so forcibly, I could not avoid concurring with him in the propriety of his taking that step; and when he expressed his uneasiness at leaving me, for even a very short period, I reminded him, that I was not only in excellent health, but should have such constant amusement in the frolics of my child, and the agreeable society of Mabel Gulstein, that I should not feel the hours of his absence so

severely, as I must have done, had it occurred in the first year of our union.

"Mabel Gulstein was a sweet, unaffected young person, the daughter of our excellent pastor. She had been educated in Geneva, and accustomed to associate much with the English there; consequently, she had acquired somewhat of their manner. During the time we had resided in Switzerland, Mr. Gulstein and his daughter had proved a very valuable acquisition to us; the former added to considerable erudition, a simplicity of manner and feeling that was to Horace and myself peculiarly delightful; and as they were the only persons with whom we associated, Mabel and I were a good deal together, and soon formed a sincere friendship for each other. Horace, seeing me apparently reconciled to his departure, resolved to set out for England immediately, being anxious to return as soon as possible on account of the situation I was at that time in.

"Much as I in reality lamented the necessity for our separation, I could not wish Horace to remain, to the possible injury of his own prospects, or those of his children; but when the moment arrived in which we were to separate, for the first time since our marriage, I felt

an almost overwhelming dread, for which even that distressing event was scarcely sufficient to account. Whether it was a mysterious presentiment of approaching evil, or merely the natural effect of parting from that being, without whose presence I scarcely seemed to exist, I know not. Days elapsed after the departure of my husband, ere the playful gambols of my blooming boy—the unceasing exertions of the kind and lighthearted Mabel—or the affectionate remonstrances of the faithful Morgan, could rouse me from the melancholy into which I was plunged.

"When I slept, it was to dream some dreadful accident had befallen my husband! When I walked, I started in terror if a leaf fell to the ground! Those around me became at length fearful lest I should become a prey to a nervous fever, when a letter arrived to assure me that my beloved Horace was once more in England, and without other anxiety than that arising from a wish speedily to return to his wife and happy home.

"I then again was enabled to resume my accustomed employments, whilst the frequent letters I received renovated my health and spirits so much, that I occasionally extended my walks

beyond my usual limits. Sometimes we turned our steps towards a rustic seat, constructed by Horace for my accommodation, under a picturesque group of trees, having a beautiful view of the valley below, and the magnificent mountains, which on the opposite side arose, one above another, until the snow-capped summit reached the clouds.

"This was my favourite retreat, and not quite a mile from our cottage; but as the road to it was entirely rising ground, I generally felt the walk too fatiguing, unless I remained some time to rest after ascending the hill.

"One evening Mabel and myself were seated on my rustic bench, observing with admiration an unusually splendid setting sun, whose brilliant light had tinged with gold the dark, purple clouds which bounded the horizon, and shed a glowing, mellow tint over the rich and picturesque landscape before us. It reminded me of the most beautiful setting sun I had ever seen, and which I recollected to have viewed with peculiar delight, along with those dear parents who were perhaps at that moment watching over the conduct of their darling child. My thoughts had fled to Benfield—to the happy home of my youth, when suddenly a

voice exclaimed, 'Emily—Miss Seymour!—have I indeed the happiness again to behold you?'

"I started at the sound, and looking up, beheld Sir Edward Hume! I instantly endeavoured to pull my veil over my face, but in my confusion, only entangled it in the trimming of my bonnet.

"'It is indeed herself!' said Sir Edward, gracefully advancing, and holding out his hand, with a look of pleased recognition.

"To avoid this *rencontre* was impossible; but being fully aware how desirable it was that my residence should have remained secret, I returned his greeting with coldness and restraint, and instantly rising, turned towards home. But Sir Edward was by no means inclined thus early to part with an old acquaintance; and, although my manner must have evinced how far from agreeable his presence was, he persisted in accompanying us home, expressing as he did so his happiness at again seeing me, in such powerful language as to call forth a blush upon my cheek, and looks of the greatest surprise from Mabel.

"When arrived at home, I said calmly, 'I must now, Sir Edward, wish you a good even-

ing, since my husband is not within; when he is from home I admit no visiters.'

"'Husband!' repeated he.

"'Yes, my husband, Mr. Seymour.'

"My countenance supported not my words, and my eyes fell to the ground, under the keen, inquiring glance of his, whilst he repeated, 'Your husband—Mr. Seymour!'

"As the servant was now standing with the door open to admit me, I merely bowed to Sir Edward, as I passed him to enter the house, when he exclaimed, 'Excuse me, madam, if I intrude upon your privacy with the freedom of an old friend. I was not aware that you were married, or my language should have been more guarded. I entreat you, therefore, not to punish me for a fault, which is entirely the result of ignorance; but suffer me to offer you my congratulations and good wishes.'

"As he spoke, without waiting for my permission, he walked directly into my little drawing-room, at the entrance of which I was standing. Mabel regarded us with undisguised astonishment, during this conversation. Since Sir Edward had thus unceremoniously made good his entrance, I could not do otherwise than request him to be seated; at the same time that the

coldness and distance of my manner, precluded the possibility of his imagining his presence agreeable to me. Finding that my self-invited guest was in no haste to quit the house, I arose from my seat, saying that he must excuse my apparent want of courtesy in quitting him, as I could not be longer absent from my child; but that, ere I did so, I begged him to receive my thanks for his good wishes, and in return to accept mine, that his excursion might prove an agreeable one; as I could not, under any circumstances, again admit his visits. Ere he could attempt to detain me, I had left the room.

"He then asked Mabel how long his old friend had been married, expressing some surprise at finding me residing there under the name of Seymour; since, if married at all, he should rather have expected to have heard me addressed by the name of Benfield. To this Mabel prudently replied, that as he was an old friend of Mrs. Seymour's, he would have obtained such information as he wished for with the greatest propriety from herself: then begging him to excuse her leaving him alone, he was under the necessity of bidding her good morning, and taking his departure.

"Fully aware of the importance it was of, that our union and residence should continue unknown, I was much distressed that Sir Edward should have discovered the latter, for although he was not certain that Horace Benfield and Mr. Seymour were the same individual, it was evident that he suspected such to be the case. I knew not what plan I ought to pursue, nor whom to consult. Mr. and Miss Gulstein were not acquainted with our history, nor did I feel that I should be justified in communicating it to them, without the sanction of my husband; whilst Morgan, although fully informed upon every circumstance, was not equal to the task of advising in so delicate a situation.

"I determined not again to admit Sir Edward on any consideration, and resolved, lest I should again encounter him in my walks, to confine myself entirely to the house, with the exception of my flower-garden; whence, as it commanded a view of the road for a considerable distance, I might easily make my escape before a visiter could arrive. Sir Edward continued to make daily efforts for admittance, though without success, until one morning, as

I was singing to my boy, he resolutely walked forward, notwithstanding the servant did all in his power to prevent his entrance.

" 'It was in vain,' said he, 'for your servants to deny you; I heard your voice, and was resolved to see you.'

" He then, without paying the least regard to my cold and constrained manner, began to play with my child, who showed every inclination to return his caresses, and Mabel, to whom he frequently addressed himself in a most insinuating manner, soon ceased to feel displeased at his intrusion. Even I should have been amused by his pleasing and animated conversation, had I not feared some unpleasant result from his discovery of my residence; added to which, the recollection that he had not only long been my ardent admirer, but had even within the last week, expressed himself in terms which argued an unabated attachment, caused me to consider his visits during my husband's absence by no means desirable. When Sir Edward left us, Mabel expressed unqualified admiration of his elegant manners and agreeable conversation.

" 'He is,' said she, 'the most delightful companion I ever met with, except Mr. Seymour.'

"'Thank you, dear Mabel, for that exception; but could you not make another?'

"She smiled, and with a blush replied,

"'Oh, you know that Jaques Walsdorf is dearer to me than any human being, except my father, and that he is more pleasing in my eyes than any other person can ever be—but I admire and love him for his innate goodness—not to say a word of his devotion to myself; but dear as he is to me, and highly as I prize his affection, I am not so blinded by my own, as to think he possesses the elegance of Mr. Seymour or Sir Edward.'

"'Mr. Walsdorf is,' said I, 'a very superior young man; and though, from the retired life he has led, he is not possessed of some of those acquirements so attractive in men of the world, he is, I believe, as superior to Sir Edward in sterling worth, as the purest gold is to an adulterated metal. That simplicity of character which forms so great a charm in Mr. Walsdorf, would probably have been exchanged for a more highly polished and graceful manner, had he been thrown into what is termed society.—Would that exchange, Mabel, have made him more worthy of your love?'

"Mabel at once acknowledged that would

not have been the case. I then told her that Sir Edward, having formerly paid his addresses to me, must, on no account, be again admitted during the absence of my husband, as it was, under such circumstances, particularly unpleasant to me to receive him.

"Notwithstanding this, having succeeded once in obtaining an entrance, Sir Edward continued to force one by some means or other almost daily. Sometimes he suddenly appeared from the shrubbery, where he must have concealed himself prior to my entering the garden; at other times he would enter at the open window, and, though I received him with coldness and constraint, yet as he offered no liberty beyond that of intruding where he evidently was not wished for, I was obliged to submit to his frequent presence.

"One morning, I was seated alone, Mabel having walked to her father's, when Sir Edward, whom I had understood to be gone on a visit several miles off, entered at the open window at which I was seated. Much as I was displeased at his intrusion, I endeavoured to receive him with a cold dignity of manner, which I thought would be more repelling than

any direct reference to the impropriety of such proceeding. I had soon reason to regret that I did not follow the impulse which had inclined me instantly to quit the room on his entrance; for, from finding me alone for the first time, he dared to assume a freedom of manner which no less astonished than alarmed me. He seized my hands—threw himself at my feet, and in despite of every effort to break from him, detained me, whilst he made a declaration of the most vehement passion.—At length I gained power to exclaim, in mingled anger and fear,

"'Unhand me instantly, Sir Edward! are these words proper towards a wife?'

"'Charming Emily,' he replied; 'ardently as I love you, I would not have made so plain, so explicit an avowal of my attachment, had I not been fully convinced that you are bound by no ties save those of love—I know that Horace Benfield and Mr. Seymour are one—I likewise know that you could not—durst not (after the fearful interdict put upon your union by Lord Benfield) marry him—I have long been aware that you were living with Benfield on the continent, but all my endeavours to find you have been vain, until accident discovered you to me.

Now listen to me, Emily—pardon me, I must forcibly detain you, since I can do so by no other means.'

"I now seated myself with as much appearance of composure as I could assume (whilst he still grasped one of my hands, which I had vainly struggled to disengage), and he proceeded: 'Horace, tired of the seclusion of this place, is now enjoying himself in the metropolis, heedless of the beauteous flower he has left to droop in his absence.—I have loved—have adored you, from the first moment of our acquaintance. Those charms which then made so deep an impression on my heart, as to cause me to resign every enjoyment in the hope of discovering your retreat, I behold only matured by the interval that has passed since we parted—it need not occasion you any surprise, then, to be told that what was only ardent affection is now become an overwhelming passion, against which it is useless for you to contend. I am willing—anxious, to give you the most convincing proof of love that a man can give; leave him whom you style your husband—fly with me—take your child with you, and I solemnly promise to make you my wife, and instantly to restore

you to that station in society you are so well calculated to adorn.'

"I heard all this—I listened in stupified amazement to each insulting word—I even preserved an appearance of calmness until he had concluded, when, with a violent effort, disengaging myself from his grasp, I exclaimed, 'Dishonourable, insulting man! this instant quit my house, and never cross its threshold more.'

"Ere he could stop me, I had rushed from the room, and reaching my own apartment, threw myself upon the bed, in a burst of hysterical emotion. As the violence of my agitation subsided, my eye caught an unfinished letter to my husband, and starting up I added, to what I had before written—'that if he wished to protect me from the insults of Sir Edward Hume, he must return without delay.'

"I sealed and instantly despatched my letter. Oh that I had been too ill to write! Ever too much the creature of impulse, I often acted on the feeling of the moment; to which cause I owe many of the most severe trials of my life. My letter was scarcely gone, ere I sent to recal it; but I was too late, the bag was already

despatched! All that was left for me to do, was to write again, making light of what had passed, and accusing myself of folly and precipitation, since I had afterwards discovered, that Sir Edward only meant that as a little complimentary *badinage,* which I had been silly enough to take seriously. This falsehood I hoped was excusable, since it was intended to prevent consequences, of which I feared even to think, but which I apprehended might otherwise have been the result of my imprudence. I now trusted the letters might arrive together, in which case, the latter would prove an antidote to the former.

"That I might avoid further insult from Sir Edward, I determined in future to sit up stairs, except in an evening, when the windows being closed, we might occupy a room on the ground floor, without fear of interruption. Mr. Gulstein and Mabel in vain urged me to take my usual exercise. I no longer thought it prudent to leave the house, to go even into my flower-garden, accompanied by my friend; yet I could not say to them that I had reason to fear insult. Sir Edward wrote to me—his letters were returned unopened; he then addressed Mabel, besought her to intercede with me, so far as

to receive one letter from an old friend, ere he quitted the country; but she declined all interference.

"At this time I heard from my husband, that he purposed setting out for Switzerland the following day, since he found his longer stay in town useless, the report of Mr. Marsden's return having proved erroneous. This information was a source of great delight to me, not only as it gave me the hope of seeing him whom I loved so tenderly, in a very short period, but I flattered myself that he would have left England, before either of my last letters arrived, in which case, probably I might on their return, intercept them, and thus prevent his knowledge of their contents.

"Within a few days after the receipt of the letter from my husband, which had given me so much pleasure, by announcing his speedy return, Mr. Gulstein, observing that I was pale from such close confinement to the house, urged me to accompany him in a walk. With my spirits lightened by the hope of soon again seeing my Horace, I was more readily prevailed upon to consent to his request than he expected; and we set out towards my favourite seat, accompanied by Mabel. The evening was

serenely beautiful—the sky one vast expanse of spotless blue, and the air so still and calm, that neither twig nor leaf seemed to move. All nature appeared hushed in repose, except the birds, which carolled forth in tuneful melody around us.

"We were seated in silent contemplation of the lovely and tranquil scene, which seemed so peculiarly in unison with the harmony of my own feelings, when suddenly we heard a shot, which was so quickly followed by a second, that it seemed but an echo to the first. I started up in affright.

"'Be not alarmed,' said Mr. Gulstein, 'it is only some boys who are shooting birds.'

"'No—no!' I wildly replied, 'they are pistols—I know they are.' And a sickening apprehension came over me, that Horace and Sir Edward had met.

"Mabel, surprised by my agitated manner, said she had never before seen me alarmed by the report of fire-arms. I replied not to her remark, but gasped, as I listened for some sound to dissipate or confirm my fears. 'Will you go home, dear Mrs. Seymour?' said Mabel, frightened by my strange look.

"'Yes, yes—home—quick!' And I ran

with almost frantic speed down the hill, whilst Mr. Gulstein was scarcely able to keep pace with my rapid steps.

"When arrived at my own door, I gazed around, in fearful anticipation of I hardly knew what, then listening earnestly, 'Hark!' I said, 'do you hear nothing?'

"'Indeed, my dear Mrs. Seymour, there is no cause for alarm: pray compose your spirits; your long confinement to the house has weakened your nervous system, and I fear the walk I urged has been too much for you; I entreat you to enter the house, and endeavour to tranquillize your mind.'

"Thus spoke the worthy pastor; but, unheeding what he said, I rushed through the house, and met at the back entrance a confirmation of my worst fears—Horace's bleeding body borne by several men! I uttered a loud and fearful shriek, and fell senseless on the ground.

"When I opened my eyes, I found our medical attendant, who had breathed a vein, standing over me. With a thrilling scream, I started from my recumbent position, but was instantly replaced; and finding myself without power to contend, my head sunk upon the pillow.

"'Let me entreat you my dear madam,' said Mr. Wilson, 'to be composed; there is every reason to believe that Mr. Seymour will do well if kept perfectly quiet; but the least agitation might prove fatal to him.'

"To hear that my beloved husband was not only alive, but likely to recover, was such a relief to my overcharged feelings, that I burst into a flood of tears. I now entreated to be admitted to see my husband, but Mr. Wilson proved inexorable; he then left me under the care of Mabel Gulstein and Morgan, who endeavoured, by every means they could devise, to give me consolation, and to prevail upon me to be ruled by the medical men. I believe my own state of exhaustion, after a pretty copious bleeding, did more towards rendering me obedient to their orders, than any thing that was said to me; for as soon as I again recovered sufficient strength to rise, I did so with an intention of proceeding to Horace's room; when Mabel authoritatively detained me, saying the surgeons were performing an operation. At these words, I again became insensible, and for several hours only recovered from one fainting-fit to sink into another; until at length I

heard the glad tidings, that a ball, which had lodged in the shoulder, had been extracted, and that all danger was at an end! Returning my most fervent thanks to the Almighty Disposer of all human events, for the mercy vouchsafed to me, I promised implicit obedience to the wishes of those around me, and shortly after, from the effects of an anodyne, dropped into a state of forgetfulness.

"The following day Horace so earnestly entreated to be allowed to see me, that his physician feared he might suffer more from a refusal to comply with his wishes, than he could do from any agitation that might be produced by our meeting. We promised to be calm, and outwardly we were so—none knew the tumultuous throbbing of that heart, which at each movement seemed as if it would burst from its prison!

"I did not attempt to utter a word—had I done so, all appearance of composure would have been at an end; but taking my station in silence by the bedside of my husband, I resolved that nothing should induce me to remove from it. Although the joint of the shoulder had been slightly injured by the ball, which might cause the entire restoration of health to be

somewhat tedious, there was no reason to fear, with youth and a good constitution, that it would not take place.

"After the first ten days, during which time I never left him, as I had a couch, on which I reclined, placed in the room, I became desirous of being informed of such particulars respecting this distressing event as had come to Mr. Gulstein's knowledge, and which were to the following effect: That some men were standing in a neighbouring field, when hearing fire-arms, they had gone towards the spot to see what it was. On their arrival, they perceived two gentlemen, one of whom was supporting the other, whilst a brace of pistols were lying on the ground. On approaching nearer, they saw that the wounded person was Mr. Seymour, and offered their assistance to convey him home, which the strange gentleman accepted, saying he would go for medical aid. Near this place on the road was the carriage, in which my husband was returning home, the postilion belonging to which had charge of the stranger's horse until he remounted him.

"The postilion had stated that a gentleman on horseback had met the carriage, in which he was conveying Mr. Seymour home; immediately

upon which, the latter gentleman had called to him to stop, and the stranger at the same time checked his horse, when what appeared to him some very angry words took place between the gentlemen, though as they spoke in a foreign language, he could only judge from their loud voices and manner; that Mr. Seymour had immediately jumped out of the carriage, taking with him his travelling pistols, and the stranger had given him his horse to hold, whilst they went into an adjoining field, where he beheld them fire together, when Mr. Seymour would have fallen, had not the stranger supported him.

"The only allusion which Horace had yet made to the duel was prior to the extraction of the ball; when he begged that, should the case end fatally, no attempt to proceed against his antagonist should be made, as he had done all he could to avoid firing. Horace afterwards informed me, that he should have left London, as I supposed, prior to the receipt of either of my letters, had he not been detained a day or two longer than he intended, in consequence of some little elegances which he had ordered for me not being completed at the appointed time. But no sooner had he received the letter in which I had so imprudently al-

luded to the insulting conduct of Sir Edward Hume, than he set out without a moment's delay, and by travelling day and night, had reached Switzerland at the time he did; when meeting Sir Edward, he had instantly demanded satisfaction for his insulting conduct towards his wife, which the baronet had at first refused; but irritated by the angry manner in which he addressed him, saying, that he should post him as a coward wherever he appeared, he at last acceded to Horace's wish to fight—the result of which had been so unpleasant to himself.

"After giving this account of their rencontre, my husband added, 'I am now, Emily, thoroughly convinced of what I had previously feared might prove the case, that by my endeavour to avoid an uncertain evil, I have rushed upon a positive one. As we were at that time united, no threats of my father's ought to have deterred me from an avowal of our marriage. I am at last fully sensible of my error, and will strive to remedy it as speedily as may be in my power; for the moment my health will admit of it, we will return to England, and openly acknowledge our union.'

"In such conversations we continued occasionally to indulge, as Horace gradually pro-

gressed towards recovery; but about a month from the period in which he was wounded, without apparent cause, a change took place, to the evident surprise and alarm of his medical attendants. He complained of considerable pain in the joint, which, notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts of the faculty, extended nearly through his frame, for by no means could a moment's cessation from almost excruciating agony be gained. Seeing him suffer thus, without the possibility of giving him any relief, nearly deprived me of my reason. Oh! how bitterly did I then bewail the folly of that conduct which had led to such intense suffering! In kneeling by his bedside, and offering up prayers for his recovery, I felt that I would most thankfully have resigned my life to gain him even a short respite from pain!

"At length my prayers seemed favourably answered; for his moans became less frequent and heartrending, until he sunk into a calm slumber. Oh! how blessed were the moments in which I watched the tranquil breathing—the composed features of my beloved husband! I wept tears of joy and gratitude; then placing my head on the pillow beside his, and worn out with anxiety and watching, I soon sunk into

sound repose, from which I was roused by the entrance of the attending physician; who, after being with us all the preceding night, had been called away on a case of pressing danger, and now, after an absence of two hours, returned.

"Gently raising my head, I whispered, 'Oh! Dr. R——, what a happy change has taken place! My husband is free from pain—and sleeps so sweetly—'

"I received no answer, and raising my eyes o his face, I encountered a look which I too well understood—it said as plainly as words could have done, 'Poor creature!—I cannot deceive thee by hopes which never can be realized; yet I have not resolution to tell thee that thy husband has not many hours to live.' I saw—I understood—I felt—all that that grave and passionless look conveyed, and staggering from the room, I fell upon the floor in utter insensibility!

"Recovering from my temporary forgetfulness, I exerted every nerve to attain self-command sufficient to enable me to resume my station at the bedside of my husband. None strove to comfort—none to deceive me; they saw that I was aware of all that they could tell, and

knew that in such an hour all human consolation was in vain.

"On my return to my Horace, I found him not only awake, but fully alive to his situation (a mortification having taken place in the shoulder-joint). He appeared chiefly anxious to prepare me for the separation which he knew to be inevitable. He then called around him the two medical men, with Mr. and Miss Gulstein—informed them in a clear and succinct manner of our marriage, with the principal circumstances attending it, desiring what he said to be taken down in writing; to which, when done he added his signature. Mr. Gulstein then administered the sacrament, and within two hours from that time he breathed his last in my arms. I know not how I was supported through this trying scene—I even recollect but few of the facts I have narrated; but I know that I held the lifeless body of my husband until I sank upon the bed insensible as himself.

"Several weeks elapsed ere I was conscious of what was passing around me; but from my friends I afterwards learned, that for a short time previous to the death of my beloved hus-

band, they had been alarmed for my intellects, as I sat by his bedside, pale and motionless as a statue of monumental marble. Whilst, holding one of my hands tenderly in his, he had vainly endeavoured to recal me to a more natural state of feeling, praying the Almighty to support me in the trial I must undergo; while as he did so, my lips had appeared to move in unison with his, though no sound escaped them.

"But when then the hand which had so earnestly grasped mine relaxed its hold—when those eyes, which had been fixed on my countenance in affectionate commiseration, became dim—the voice which had been urging me to look forward with humble confidence to a reunion in the realms of the blessed, ceased—then, and not till then, I had seemed aware of my situation, and clasping the beloved form closely in my arms, fell senseless upon the bed.

"Heaven in its mercy spared me much intense suffering, or if I suffered I remembered it not. My life was in great danger during several weeks after the birth of a stillborn child, which immediately succeeded the death of my husband. I was in a high fever, and quite delirious the whole time; but when reason at last resumed her empire, all I had lost in a moment

was before me. My ever kind friend Mabel, and the faithful Morgan, rejoiced to hear me again speak rationally, interrupted not my grief; but such deeply-seated sorrow admits not of description.

"In time I became able to converse more calmly with those around me, but my only pleasure was to gaze upon the countenance of my lovely boy, and trace there a resemblance to his lamented father. Ten weeks had elapsed from that fatal day on which I became a widow, when Mr. Gulstein observed that he considered it equally his duty to point out to me the path I ought to pursue, as it was mine to follow it, when so pointed out.

"You must, my dear Mrs. Seymour," he continued, "no longer give way to unavailing grief. It is highly requisite that you should, with as little delay as possible, proceed to England, to establish your child's claim to his father's property. Hitherto you only know that when I accompanied the remains of your lamented husband to Benfield for interment, according to his desire, I there met Mr. Frederick Benfield, and informed him that his brother's widow and son were in Switzerland, but would come to England as soon as the

health of the former would admit. It is now necessary that I should inform you what further steps I took, and the result. I proceeded immediately from Benfield to London, where I saw Lord Benfield, and delivered to him his son's letter (entreating his kindness and protection for his widow and infant son), with a copy of his will. I likewise mentioned the statement made and signed, in presence of the medical men and myself, by Mr. Benfield, respecting his marriage. When his lordship had read the packet which I had placed in his hands, and heard my recital, he said to me, 'Sir, I thank you for the trouble you have taken, and do not doubt you believe what you have related to be true; but as I have the strongest reasons for doubting the authenticity of the account of my son's marriage, I cannot conscientiously notice the lady or her offspring, unless those doubts be removed. With regard to the will, I will see my man of business in the course of the day, and then have the honour of again conferring with you.' I assured his lordship that I had myself seen the certificate of his son's marriage and therefore knew it to be binding. 'I question not your belief on the subject,' he replied; 'but you, as a foreigner, may be deceived.' I

then left Lord Benfield, and proceeded to call upon Mrs. Edmonds, and Mr. Morrison. The former was, I found, very ill, and the latter was gone into Devonshire, in consequence of the illness of a sister. Alone and unfriended in a foreign country,' continued Mr. Gulstein, 'ignorant of its laws, and without directions from yourself as to what line of procedure you might wish me to adopt, I thought it best to return to Switzerland, and await your amended health. "The time has now arrived when it is highly necessary that you should exert that strength of mind, which I know you to possess, to establish the claims of your child to the property of his father. I know too little of the law of England to be aware how far his connexions can contest the point.'

"'They can only contest it, my friend,' I replied, 'by the power of the rich and strong over the poor and weak; but they shall find that a mother, although wellnigh friendless and broken-hearted, has yet sufficient energy to endeavour to prevent her orphan boy being defrauded of his birthright.'

"I then inquired if Mr. Gulstein had heard nothing further from Lord Benfield, when he showed me a letter he had received from his

lordship's agent, Mr. Wilson, the day after having held the conversation before stated with his employer, in which he said that as it appeared from the late Mr. Benfield's will, that all his personalty, together with his cottage in Switzerland, was left to the lady whom he styled his wife, his noble client did not purpose interfering with her claim to them; but the estate in England being, by previous arrangement, settled upon the Honourable Frederick Benfield, in case his brother died unmarried, that gentleman had already taken possession of, and would continue to retain, unless much stronger proofs of the marriage could be produced than any they had yet seen, to substantiate the claims of the mother and child.

"I saw the immediate necessity of exertion, and no longer resigned myself to the indulgence of unavailing sorrow. Having consulted with my kind friends as to the plan most eligible for me to pursue, they entirely coincided with me in opinion that not a day should now be lost in setting out for England; upon my arrival in which country, I could consult my friends Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison; from the former of whom letters had arrived giving a much more favourable account of her health than that

brought by Mr. Gulstein, although she said she did not feel quite equal to taking the journey and voyage to Switzerland to join me, which she ardently wished to do.

"Mr. Gulstein and Mabel urged me to suffer them to accompany me to England; but I would not for an instant assent to such a proposition. Already I felt that I had been too burdensome to these excellent friends; for Mr. Gulstein, advanced in years, had been much harassed in body and mind by his former melancholy expedition; and the amiable, affectionate Mabel had long been engaged to marry a most exemplary young man, who had possessed her heart almost from childhood; but had, in consequence of my affliction, postponed her marriage for some time. I could not, therefore, consent to their accompanying me, and thus longer retard the happiness of persons who deserved to enjoy it so entirely.

"With an almost bursting heart, I left my friends, and that residence in which I had known the extremes of felicity and wretchedness. As the good old man gave me his parting benediction, he added, 'Send for us, dear Mrs. Seymour, whenever you wish to see us, and we will instantly join you; well do I know that

Walsdorf will never refuse to resign Mabel's society, if you require it.' I replied only by my tears, and then tore myself away. Accompanied by my child, and attended by Morgan, and a Swiss footman, I proceeded on my journey.

"Having arrived in London, I drove to a respectable private hotel, and there engaged apartments, announcing myself as the Honourable Mrs. Benfield. The following morning I wrote to Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Morrison, entreating them immediately to come to me, as I did not wish to quit my apartments, until I had first obtained their advice.

"That day and the next passed, without a line from either of my friends; I then began to apprehend tnat my dear Mrs. Edmonds had had a relapse, and was too ill to write; and instantly ordered a carriage, in which I drove to Beech Grove, it being only a few miles from London.

"When arrived within the iron gates, of what had once been to me a happy home, the deserted appearance of all around gave a chill to my heart, which increased to an almost death-like sensation as, on driving up to the door, I perceived the windows covered with printed

bills. My servant having, by Morgan's direction, asked the girl, who replied to his summons, if Mrs. Edmonds was within, was answered that 'the old lady had been dead more than a fortnight, and there was to be a sale there the following week.'

"I had heard enough; she who, next to my husband and parents, was the dearest friend I ever possessed, was then no more! I had no longer any human being, in the land of my nativity, to aid me with advice or sympathy. Whilst she lived, I could ever rely upon her affectionate kindness, as upon that of a mother; to her wisdom I had looked for assistance in the arduous task before me; to the high estimation in which her character was held, for protection!

"This blow, so sudden and unlooked for, was indeed severe. I felt as if a spell hung upon all to whom I clung for affection or assistance, and convulsively clasping my child to my breast, I exclaimed, 'Thou art still spared to me! O Almighty Father, take not this my last prop from me!'

"Poor Morgan, the faithful participator in all my sorrows, was herself so overpowered, that it was with difficulty she could give

orders for our return to town. When, knowing that it was my intention when I set out, to call at Mr. Morrison's, without attempting to interrupt my grief by inquiry, she directed the postilion to the residence of his mother. When arrived there, a servant stated that he was gone to Italy.

" 'To Italy?' repeated Morgan, in dismay.

" 'Yes, he went last week along with my mistress and his sister, who is in a decline.'

" Morgan then said, 'Drive home.'

" 'Home, alas!' I internally said, 'where is my home? Have I any home but the grave?' We once more took refuge in that home to the friendless traveller—an hotel.

" For some days I was utterly unable to take any steps on the business for which I had come to England, so completely overwhelmed was I by the succession of distressing events, which continued to burst upon me. During this time, I received despatches, from Switzerland, enclosing letters from Mrs. Edmonds's nephew, and Mr. Morrison; the former was to inform me of the death of my friend, as likewise that she had left me a legacy of five hundred pounds; the latter to state the necessity of his

accompanying his mother and sister to Italy, at the same time assuring me, that he should return instantly upon hearing that his presence would be useful to me, provided his sister should then be in such a state of health, as to enable him to leave her with any propriety.

"With affectionate earnestness, Morgan entreated me not again to give way to grief and despondence, but for the interest of my child, to exert myself, and recollect the dying injunctions of her master. These words had an almost talismanic influence upon my feelings, and I instantly replied, 'I will not again require to be reminded of my duty; from this time I will devote every energy, I will strain every nerve towards the fulfilment of that duty, for which I came to England.'

"I then revolved in my mind the possibility of interesting some one in my behalf, who might be of use. I wrote to Colonel Hartington, but I found that he was abroad. I then applied to Mr. Taylor, an eminent chancery barrister, with whom my father had been acquainted, but he was confined to his bed by a fit of the gout. My once numerous friends were, I did not doubt, all estranged from me, since I had,

on account of the peculiar situation in which I was placed, long ceased to correspond with any of them.

"After passing a sleepless night, I arose with a determination of appealing to the justice and affection of Lord and Lady Benfield. I could not believe that they would refuse credence to my assertions, when supported by such proofs as I had to show; neither could I suppose it possible, when I recalled to my remembrance the attachment Lady Benfield had formerly evinced towards me, that she would refuse that protection, which my present desolate state required, notwithstanding I had, contrary to her wish, become the wife of her eldest son; more particularly, as her favourite son had lately married Miss Jefferson, by which means her immense wealth now centred in the family. How far my expectations were realized, will soon be shown.

"When Morgan was informed of my intention, she only replied, that she hoped she might be allowed to attend me. 'Certainly,' I answered, 'for I mean to take my little Horace; he will surely prove a powerful pleader with his grandfather and grandmother.'

"I made a point of being at Lord Benfield's before her ladyship's usual hour of receiving visiters, consequently, I was fully prepared for the porter's reply of 'not at home,' to which I desired my man to say that I had called at that hour on business of importance to his lady, who would, I doubted not, gladly admit me to her *boudoir*. He hesitated, but I instantly alighted, and followed by Morgan and my boy, ascended the steps towards the entrance hall.

"The porter I perceived was a stranger; the footman, who advanced to meet me, was equally so, but from hearing me announced as Mrs. Benfield, he cast a scrutinizing glance over my person; then saying, as he led the way up stairs and ushered me in the usual morning-room, that he would send to inform his lady of my being there, he closed the door.

"What were the feelings with which I again found myself in an apartment, in which so many happy hours had been passed! As I entered, I beheld my figure reflected by a large mirror at the end of the room; I started at the contrast between my appearance at that moment, and what it had been when last I had

viewed its polished surface. I was, I recollected, at that time waiting for Lady Benfield, whom I was to accompany to a splendid ball; and whilst, with gratified vanity, I had arranged a stray curl, and taken a survey of a beautiful dress, given to me by my affectionate father for the occasion, Horace had whispered, that I should see nothing half so lovely where I was gazing, as what I then saw reflected there. How changed from the joyous, blooming, brilliant figure, full of youth, and health, and happiness, was the being now reflected by the same mirror! Pale, attenuated, care-worn, without a vestige of what I had been, attired in weeds, and leading in my hand a lovely boy, whilst my feeble steps, and hollow cheeks, proclaimed me hastening to the grave! My mind had gone back to former scenes, and forgetful of the present moment, I was only recalled to a recollection of it, by the entrance of Lady Benfield.

"As the veil on my bonnet nearly hid my face, her ladyship did not recognise me on entering; from which I afterwards surmised, that the servant had, from motives of kindness, not announced my name. Addressing me

as a stranger, she requested to know to what cause she might attribute the honour of my visit.

"'Oh, Lady Benfield!' I exclaimed, 'Have you then forgotten me?'

"'How—is it possible, do I see Emily Seymour?'

"'No, no, not Emily Seymour,' said I, throwing myself at her feet, 'but Emily Benfield—the widow of your son—the mother of your grandchild.' Unable to say more, I caught hold of the chair near which she was standing for support.

"'Rise, madam, I beseech you,' she replied, in an ironical manner; 'pray humble not yourself to me—I claim no duty from you, or your offspring—I do not believe Horace to have been married—and I never will countenance his paramour or illegitimate child.'

"I felt the blood rush to my head, and, rising in uncontrollable agitation, I said, 'I had hoped for justice from you, madam; at any rate, I thought it my duty to try to obtain it, ere I had recourse to other measures—but, since I only meet with insult, where I might have expected pity and protection, I must now ap-

peal to the laws of England to establish the claims of my child, for which I have abundant proofs in my possession.'

" Taking my boy in my arms, I then walked towards the door by which I had entered. ' Hold,' said her ladyship, ' if you possess such proofs, you cannot surely object to showing them—as that may possibly preclude the painful necessity of making this unpleasant affair public.'

" ' I can have no objection, madam, to these documents being perused by you—for that reason I brought them here—but after the insult I had received, I no longer thought of offering them to you.'

" I then placed a small packet which I held in my hand, upon the table near which she stood; when her ladyship, eagerly seizing it, and tearing off the envelope, read the first enclosure, which proved to be a copy of the certificate of our marriage; when, instantly, with the countenance of one of Milton's fallen angels, she tore it, and all that the packet contained, into a thousand pieces.

" ' See—see—how I scatter your proofs to the winds; now apply to a public tribunal—bring forward the documents which are to ruin

the prospects of my Frederick, and to injure the character of a noble family, if you can. I was apprized that you and that scorpion whom I nurtured but to sting me, had fabricated papers by which you hoped to defraud my youngest son of his birthright, placing your spurious offspring in his place; this I have prevented; now, and for ever, ends our intercourse.'

"As Lady Benfield's beautiful features distorted by passion, and voice, usually so melodious, almost inarticulate from the same cause, made her appear more like a fury than a human being, my child was so much alarmed as to throw its little arms convulsively around me, whilst it gazed with an affrighted countenance upon its cruel grandmother. Lady Benfield beheld its alarm, and a trace of feeling passed momentarily over her face, then, in a subdued tone, she said, 'Leave your child with me, if you wish it protected, and I promise you it shall be tended and provided for as befits its birth.'

"'Rather,' said I, roused by what seemed only an additional insult, 'may it follow its mother to a premature grave. No, madam, your grandchild shall be no burden to you—

you have disowned him—and he will no more intrude upon you; but think not you have destroyed the documents on which would depend the success of our suit—the papers you have seen were only copies, which, had you condescended to read, you would soon have perceived—the originals are perfectly safe.'

" All I had yet seen and heard was calmness itself, when compared to the burst of passion with which Lady Benfield was now overwhelmed. She stamped—raved like a maniac, and when, with my terrified boy, I attempted to quit the room, she caught my arm, and, grasping it tightly, compelled me to hear her indulge her vindictive spirit in abuse of my lamented husband—then, suddenly changing her subject, ' And you—you are like your hated mother, in mind as in person—she robbed me of happiness in the outset of life, leaving me only pride, vanity, and ambition, to compensate for him whom I fondly loved; and now you, her daughter, dare to step in between me and my known wishes. But, hark ye. I am not now to be braved with impunity; you have gone far—go but one step farther, and life itself shall not be sacred—a child's life,' looking with contempt at my poor frightened boy, ' hangs but

by a slender thread at best. Frederick Benfield *is*, and *shall* be heir to his father's title. Mark me, opposition is useless; resign your claims, and you and your child shall be provided for—oppose my wishes, and you not only *may*, but *shall* perish, without a hand held out to aid you. Now depart, and reflect upon what has passed.' She then removed her hand from my arm, and I gladly rushed from her presence, and fled towards the carriage, which had conveyed me there, followed by Morgan who had remained in the anti-room during our conference. When seated in the carriage, with my darling pressed close to my bosom, scarcely durst I flatter myself that he was safe from the rage of his unprincipled grandmother.

"My nerves were so much affected by the scene I had witnessed, that I was again during several days confined to my room by indisposition, and so much had Lady Benfield's threats alarmed me, that I durst not suffer Horace to be a moment out of my sight. Whilst I was unable to quit my room, I was told that a gentleman had twice inquired for me, but had left the hotel without giving his name.

"Nearly a week after my interview with Lady Benfield, whilst revolving in my mind the diffi-

culties attending the situation in which I was placed, the door of the sitting-room, which I had just entered for the first time since my indisposition, suddenly opened, and to my surprise and consternation, Frederick Benfield came forward. He advanced with that cold, sarcastic manner, which was so natural to him, saying, 'I hope I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Seymour in good health.'

"'No one,' said I, rising, 'answers to that name here, sir—you have, I presume, mistaken the room.'

"'No, my fair friend,' he replied, with a look of cool assurance, 'I have made no such mistake. I wished to see a lady whom I have only known as Miss Seymour, and that lady is yourself: but I have something for your private ear—I will therefore thank you to dismiss your Abigail.'

"When Frederick entered the room, I had risen with an intention of immediately quitting it; but upon further consideration, I thought it better to hear what he wished to say, for although I did not expect that we should ever make an amicable adjustment of our affairs, yet I felt that if I refused to hear him, he would be justified in saying, that I would not give him

an opportunity of conferring on the subject. Therefore when he requested that Morgan might be dismissed, I immediately desired her to retire into the adjoining room with my child.

"As soon as we were alone, Frederick, who had taken a seat near me, addressed me thus: 'Now, madam, that your maid has left us, I can speak on the business for which I came here; for where the honour of an ancient and noble family is concerned, it is advisable to be cautious.'

"'True, sir; and I am happy to learn that you are at length aware that it is for your own credit to guard that of the family to which you belong; had you earlier done so, it would have been well.'

"As I thus replied, I perceived one of those sinister looks from under his closely-knit and scowling eyebrows, which I so well knew.

"'I scarcely know, madam, by which of your numerous *cognomens* you now wish to be addressed; but that is immaterial—I came not here to bandy words with you, but to make a proposition for the benefit of yourself and child, which I cannot doubt that you will gladly accede to. I think it advisable to preface my proposal with a short sketch, not only of the situation in which you as well as ourselves are

now placed, but likewise in which we have been for some years past, in case any of the circumstances should have escaped your memory, or be still unknown to you. You are aware that a contract was entered into by Lord Benfield and the late Mr. Jefferson, for the union of Horace and Miss Jefferson; the contracting parties binding themselves to pay a very large sum, in case their children should form any other matrimonial connexion than the one thus marked out for them. My father's pecuniary embarrassments would have been entirely removed by this union, which his son positively refused to enter into—it was utterly impossible for him to discharge his bond, should he be called upon to pay the forfeit by Horace's forming any other marriage: he therefore took a solemn oath to destroy himself, should his son marry any one but Miss Jefferson! Horace was, as we all were, dreadfully shocked; and knowing the violence of Lord Benfield's passions, to avert so dreadful an act, he solemnly promised never to marry.'

"Here I made an effort to speak, but he continued.

"'Pardon me—I must not be interrupted. You don't believe this—no matter—*we* say, and

we believe it. Horace promised not to marry during the life of his father. I fear I am tedious, but I again repeat I must not at present be interrupted. Horace unfortunately at this time loved a beautiful young woman, who not only returned his love, but equally unknown to her parents, and to his, entered into an engagement with him. Yet the parents of the lady were too indulgent ever to deny the slightest wish of her heart, and had she chosen openly to have avowed her preference, she could then have no cause to fear the result; for, at that time, she knew not of the contract respecting her betrothed husband.

"But deceitful is the heart of woman! This young lady's proved so, for she was in the constant habit of meeting Horace clandestinely—pardon me, madam, I will listen to you when my tale is finished; you must now hear me. There was, at the time of which I speak, a youth thrown into the society of this lovely girl (in truth she was nature's masterpiece), who not only had the presumption to love her, but, although he was a mere younger son, to tell her so. For her affection he would have resigned every other prospect this world could offer—but he, alas! was not,

like his more fortunate elder brother, "cast in nature's fairest mould." In sooth, to him she had been a very niggard—yet beneath his deformed and unprepossessing exterior, he had such passions, as might, if turned into a proper channel, have brought honour upon himself and friends—but slighted and scorned by her whom he loved—they threatened to burst their bounds, and overwhelm all who opposed them!—Talents he had, or thought he had, which, properly applied, might have obtained wealth and honours; but what availed such gifts in female eyes, when opposed to the person of Apollo in his brother. His proposals were contemptuously rejected—from that hour he breathed a solemn oath to reduce that woman, whom he had so ardently loved, to the lowest depths of degradation—that brother, too, whose symmetry of person, had, even in childhood, caused the passers by to look with contemptuous pity on his deformity, and who, in afterlife, had dared to point out his failings—yet hoped to gain his affection—who came between him and rank, and fortune, and love—that brother he vowed to be revenged upon!

"Fortune aided the wishes of the rejected suitor; the lady's parents died—her guardian proved

worthless, and squandered her property—whilst rumour, with her thousand tongues, bruited it abroad, that Horace, the virtuous, the immaculate Horace Benfield, had seduced the destitute and orphan daughter of his friend—the favoured companion of his mother—the woman, who loving *him* (for I will no longer speak in enigmas) scorned *me!*—Was I not now sufficiently avenged? No; for though I had believed I hated her, the agony I suffered on hearing of my brother's having succeeded in gaining her, convinced me that I still madly loved. Mine were not the tame feelings of regret for her fall—they were envy and jealousy of him who had accomplished her destruction.

"You tremble, lady—now, mark me well! I was naturally ambitious, but born a younger brother—deformed in person, and despised by her whom I had loved—what prospect had I of ascending that ladder at the foot of which I was placed? There was only one means of attaining the height I wished. My brother had refused to marry the heiress. It was true she was ugly—more deformed in person than myself—ill-tempered—coarse—and in every way disagreeable; but she rolled in wealth sufficient to make me all I wished, and I determined to

win and wear her, although my wooing might be like Richard's to the Lady Anne; for I knew myself to be an object of dislike to her. I found the way to please was to praise her for such qualities as she was totally free from. Her beauty—her elegance—her grace—her amiable disposition—these were the constant theme of my flattering tongue, occasionally seasoned with reflections upon the mental and personal qualifications of Horace and yourself. No wonder that I at last gained her heart—if a woman so devoted to herself could possess a heart for any other human being!

"At last I told my love—ye gods, what love! She owned a reciprocal flame; but said, that she had unfortunately made a vow never to marry any one who was not at least presumptive heir to a title. In vain I represented that it would not be difficult, when her wealth was united to my family interest, to procure a peerage—that was not sufficient to gratify her pride. Unless the title was ancient and hereditary, she preferred remaining single—should any thing occur to Horace—should he die unmarried, or without heirs, then, indeed, she should no longer object to being mine. There is no reasoning with a fool, particularly a vain and ambitious fool. I

called in the aid of my mother—her eloquence and power of persuasion were thrown upon Miss Jefferson's cold and calculating spirit.

" 'You were at this time living with Horace, in a foreign country, and under a fictitious name; it was my interest to believe the reports which were prevalent to your prejudice, I easily prevailed upon Miss Jefferson to believe them likewise, as, since you had withdrawn from all connexion with those who had formerly known you, there were none to vindicate your fame. I have given you this sketch of our situation at the time of Horace's death, that you may better understand our relative positions.

" 'The gentleman who attended my brother's remains to England, showed Lord Benfield papers attesting your marriage, and the consequent legitimacy of your child. My father said they were forgeries. Could his son do otherwise? In consequence of Horace's dying unmarried, his property reverted to me; your own fortune is entirely gone—you are without friends—the few who would and could have aided you, are removed by death, or estranged from you by the belief that you are undeserving their regard. Thus, with a strong prejudice against you, were you to bring for-

ward your cause, you would find yourself opposed by all that unbounded wealth, pride, ambition, and great family interest, could put in requisition; and when you consider how easy it is for the wealthy to bribe lawyers to delay (besides which, they are seldom inclined to be very expeditious), and to remove the cause from court to court, you will perceive how little probability of success there would be, even were your claim good. And for what, and whom, would this expense and trouble be incurred? For the benefit of an infant, who may probably be in his grave, ere the cause could be decided in the usual course of such law-suits. Or should that not be the case, he would, after struggling through a youth of poverty and hardship, be called to an empty title, for the expenses in which he would be involved would more than swallow up the property yet remaining, as far as his life interest in it would go.

" 'I have now, madam, fairly stated the case. I came here, therefore, to propose settling upon you five hundred pounds per annum for life, and giving your son ten thousand pounds upon his attaining the age of twenty-one, with the interest thereof until that period, upon con-

dition of your giving up every document by which you hope to prove your marriage, and your child's claim. Should you refuse this proposition, you are at liberty to proceed how and as you like, since we are unanimous in a determination to oppose you. My father will do so, because he wants money, with which my wife will not otherwise supply him. My mother,' with a bitter smile wreathing around his thin lips, 'because I have ever been her favourite child, and she says nature meant me for a *lord*. My wife, because when she married me, she meant to be a viscountess, and therefore she says she *will* be one. As for myself, I need not repeat my motives, you already know them sufficiently; now, madam, I am ready to hear any thing you may wish to say.'

"I was utterly unable to reply; once or twice in the course of his address, I had attempted to interrupt him; but finding my efforts totally disregarded, I had at length resigned myself to hearing in silence all he had to say. He saw with undissembled satisfaction, the appalling effect which what he had said had upon me, and finding I made no attempt to reply, he arose, saying, 'I will call upon you

to-morrow, madam, when I hope your own sense will dictate to you the wisdom of conforming to the plan I have proposed; or, should you still be so blind as to persist in a claim that must be ruinous to yourself and child, I shall request to be favoured with a sight of the documents on which you found that claim. I will now no longer intrude upon your time, but leave you to consider what has passed.' So saying, with a more respectful manner than that in which he entered, he quitted the apartment.

"No sooner did I find myself alone, than I gave way to those emotions which had been with difficulty subdued during his presence. This cruel, this insulting man, had indeed probed me to the quick. Who had deceived the kindest and best of parents? Who had caused the door of public opinion to be shut against me? Conscience answered, myself. My kind, my exemplary friend, dead—Mr. Morrison gone to a distant land, and uncertain as to his return—one of my guardians absconded, after depriving me of my property, and the other, of whom I knew nothing personally, abroad—my former friends all estranged from me, by the voice of calumny, or my own apparent neglect—the

powerful family of my husband combined against me, and not only resolved to oppose me (by every means which want of principle, aided by unbounded wealth, could suggest), in the courts of law, but assiduously traducing my character in private; without a friend to whom I could apply for advice or assistance, young, ignorant of all matters of business, and almost broken-hearted, to whom could I turn for consolation? 'To that great Being alone,' I inwardly replied, 'who is a father to the fatherless, and in whom the widow and the orphan are commanded to trust.'

"Thus saying, I sunk upon my knees in prayer, and arose composed in mind, and consequently invigorated in body. My resolution was instantly formed. I would give up all idea of asserting the claims of myself and child, until a more fortuitous period should arrive; for I doubted not that a just Providence would, in its own good time, restore my child to its birthright. In the mean while, I resolved to retire far from all who had ever seen or known me, far from the wicked machinations of my husband's relatives, who, I begun to think, would scruple at nothing to remove my innocent boy out of their way. I reflected with equal dread upon

the maniac language of his grandmother, and the cool, sarcastic, methodical cruelty of his uncle.

"I was not so utterly deficient of pecuniary resources as Frederick Benfield thought me; I had nearly six thousand pounds, which had been placed in the funds by Mrs. Edmonds, after my father's death, in addition to the house and furniture in Switzerland. On the interest of this sum, I could support myself and child in privacy in some remote corner of England. I explained my plan to my faithful servant, who, much as she wished to see her mistress restored to her proper station, rejoiced in it; since the opinion she had formed of Lady Benfield and her son, led her to apprehend every thing from their cruelty.

"I that evening dismissed my Swiss servant, with despatches for Mr. Gulstein and Mabel, the latter of whom I was sure would gladly engage him as a servant, upon her approaching marriage; and the next morning, at an early hour, we left London, and after proceeding two stages on the high north road, we diverged to the right, and continued moving from place to place, as fancy led me; sometimes remaining a few days at any little retired village, of which

the situation pleased me. At length, by a strangely circuitous route, we reached Yorkshire. This county I thought more likely to prove a place of concealment than any other, because not only distant from all I had known, but likewise from its size and great population, its inhabitants were less likely to remark a stranger's fixing upon a residence there.

"The rest you know: I have here lingered out four years of my life, not, I trust, altogether unprofitably, since I have been led to trace most of my past sorrows to my own imprudence, some instances of which, at the time, appeared but trivial, yet in their consequences have proved fatal.

"Had not my imprudence given a handle to Lady Benfield's art, and her son's cold, calculating villany, they would not have dared to form plans for our destruction, nor would they have conceived the possibility of their answering when formed. In the instruction of my child (for I am of opinion with those who think education commences in the cradle), in preparing for that world to which I have felt myself advancing by slow, but sure steps, and in practising the little accomplishments of which I am mistress, my time has passed tranquilly, if

not happily: and, I trust, through the goodness of the Almighty, when I depart from a world in which I have suffered much, to be permitted to rejoin those who were so dear to me on earth; and, if it may be allowed to a spirit, after its release from this mortal tenement, to watch over those whom it has loved most ardently, that I may still prove my affection to my darling child, by guarding him from harm, though apparently removed from him.

"In the above narrative, I have probably entered into *minutiæ* more than was requisite, but I have felt a painful pleasure in endeavouring to recal scenes and conversations to my memory, which, although they did not at the time make any strong impression, yet give a greater insight into character, than circumstances which might appear of more importance.

"From Mabel Gulstein and from Morgan, I received an account of what occurred during moments of acute affliction; for I have ever found that at those periods, my memory became too treacherous to depend upon.

"Almost immediately after my return to England, my friend Mabel was united to Mr. Walsdorf; and as a small token of esteem and gratitude, I presented them with the remainder

of my furniture, after selecting a few articles to be sent to England, with my books, and musical instruments. From Mrs. Walsdorf I heard, that about two months after I left Switzerland, a stranger (who, from the description, I believed was Frederick Benfield), called upon them, to make inquiries respecting my place of residence, et cetera; but aware of how much importance it was of; that my place of abode should be concealed, they had evaded every inquiry.

"Mr. Morrison soon lost his favourite sister, since which, he has been travelling in Asia; our letters pass through the hands of Mrs. Walsdorf (as I think it desirable my residence should be known to as few persons as possible); he will, he says, instantly return to England, whenever his evidence may be thought necessary.

"To those who may read these pages, I scarcely need add, that in this humble and peaceful retreat, I have been indebted to my excellent pastor for much consolation and sympathy. May he pass through life without requiring other aid, than that of his worthy partner, or, should he need it, may he meet with a friend as disinterested and kind, as he has been to the writer of this narrative."

Thus (continued Colonel Thornville) ended the melancholy history of this lovely and unfortunate young woman. Had I known it during her life, I would have informed her of many circumstances of which she was totally ignorant, and which would have tended towards unravelling what had seemed so inexplicable in Lady Benfield's conduct. In early life I was, although much older than either of them, intimately acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Seymour. I likewise knew Lady Benfield, for we were at that time all near neighbours in the country. Mr. Seymour was the only child of a general officer, who, after faithfully serving his country during a long period, at its termination retired on half-pay; his greatest pleasure then being the superintendence of his son's education, who repaid all his father's anxiety by proving every thing a fond parent could wish.

Nature had done much for young Seymour. His face and person were remarkably fine, and to talents of the first order, was added so excellent a temper, as to prove a blessing to himself and all connected with him. Education completed what nature had so well begun, and at twenty-three years of age, Henry Seymour could scarcely have been equalled, certainly not surpassed, by

any then in England. He had early expressed a wish to enter the sacred profession, and, as Lord Benfield, who had served under General Seymour, promised him an excellent living, at that time in the possession of a very old person, the general made no objection to his choice. Emily Woodville was the only child of the rector of our parish, a man of good family, high character, and considerable classical attainments; she was, in truth, a lovely being—so gentle in her nature—so fair—so delicate, and of so light and fragile a form, that, as she moved with the grace and lightness of a sylph, one almost feared lest too rude a breath of air should approach her! This sweet plant, brought up by such a father as I have described, and by a mother who excelled in every feminine virtue and acquirement, was beloved by all the neighbourhood.

At that period we could boast another beauty, in Maria Morris; she was the only daughter of a person of small fortune, who having early lost a wife to whom he was strongly attached, had retired from the law, to which profession he had been bred, to live upon his little patrimony, which barely enabled him to give his daughter the education of a gentlewoman. Miss Morris was born with

strange passions, which, instead of being checked by judicious care, were fostered by the extreme indulgence of a doting father; added to which, the absence of female superintendence during the years of childhood had caused them to attain a growth which threatened to destroy her own happiness, and that of her friends. Mr. Morris, when too late, perceived the error he had been guilty of, by over indulgence of that being who possessed all his affection—but although he perceived it, he had not energy of character to endeavour to counteract it by any efforts of his own—though he had resolution to send her to a seminary of high repute, to which Miss Woodville was at that time going. Thus, these young people, coming from the same neighbourhood, and travelling to and from school together, were acquainted more intimately than they otherwise would have been, from the dissimilarity of their dispositions and habits.

Both these young ladies were acquainted with Henry Seymour. Maria Morris, not only knew, but loved him to such excess, that she resolved no art or blandishment, which she could devise, should be left untried to gain his heart; and when she viewed her own very beautiful face in the

glass, she thought it scarcely possible that an inexperienced youth could withstand her charms.

Maria soon perceived that during their vacations, Seymour passed the greatest part of his time at Mr. Woodville's; she, therefore, affected a violent friendship for the unsuspecting Emily, hoping by such means to gain more of Mr. Seymour's society; whilst the latter, in the simplicity of a tender and affectionate heart, returned Miss Morris's assumed friendship, with the reality, blaming herself for having before thought less highly of her disposition and character than she deserved; though her delicate sense of propriety caused her to see many little traits in her friend, which she wished to be corrected. But she would say in excuse, "Poor Maria has had no kind mother to watch over and to check every foible as I have had—now that she is so much with us, she will have such an example before her in my dear mother, that she will, I doubt not, correct those failings which deteriorate from her otherwise amiable qualities."

Thus hoping, Emily forwarded Maria's plan of spending the greatest part of her time at the parsonage, and Mrs. Seymour, pitying her forlorn and desolate situation, and fascinated by her insinuating manner, readily concurred in

the wish of Emily, that she should have every advantage their society could afford.

Such were the feelings of Mrs. and Miss Woodville towards Miss Morris; and Henry Seymour, when listening to the sweet tones of her melodious voice, and looking at her beautiful face, which beamed with well-assumed affection towards her amiable friend, would wonder that he should not have formerly been more pleased with her.

The young friends returned to school for the last time, and Seymour took an almost equally affectionate leave of them both—though the tender pressure with which he relinquished the hand of Emily, assured her that the love he had expressed for her in childhood was not diminished.

On their return home, Maria, as before, almost lived at the parsonage-house; if prevented being there even for a day, she wrote to assure her friend of the pain it gave her to be obliged to absent herself from those she so much loved and admired; and Emily, grateful for such affection, replied with sincerity, that Maria's society was always a pleasure to her. Seymour daily rode or walked with the fair friends, who were generally accompanied by Mr. and

Mrs. Woodville, or General Seymour, consequently those hours were not so delightful to Maria as when seated at their work or pencils, whilst Seymour read to them, when she could, unobserved, fix her eyes upon his fine and expressive features.

Mr. Seymour having taken leave of his friends, after the Christmas vacation, returned for nearly his last time to college, and as Emily, with eyes suffused with tears, watched his retreating footsteps from the window at which she was seated, she was surprised by the sound of a suppressed sob — on turning to inquire the cause, she perceived Maria Morris apparently in an agony of grief: forgetting her own sorrow in what appeared the so much deeper distress of her friend, she tenderly inquired the cause of her affliction, upon which Maria threw herself into her arms, sobbing with almost hysterical violence. Emily in vain strove to sooth her; with every effort on her part, the grief of her friend seemed to increase—at length, in almost unintelligible language, she made the gentle girl a confidant of her love towards Seymour! Emily, pale and trembling, heard it as her death-knell. Mr. Seymour, it was true, had never formally proposed himself for her accept-

ance; but, accustomed from childhood to associate together, and each to think no happiness complete unless partaken of by the other, she had never formed an idea of his having any female companion but herself; and when he had spoken to her of his various plans for the welfare of that flock which he trusted would hereafter be committed to his care, she had ever believed herself associated in the picture he had sketched. She now, for the first time, imagined her own feelings might have deceived her, and that he had only thought of her as the friend of his childhood, not as the companion of his riper years.

Maria, having acknowledged her love, watched the effect upon her unsuspecting friend, and then added, "Oh, how long will the time appear until we again meet!"

"Has Henry," at length faltered Emily, "has he proposed to you, Maria?"

"Not absolutely," said Maria, affecting to blush and look down; "though he has all but done so—see Emily, this is the ring which he gave me yesterday, as he set me home, and this," drawing a locket from her bosom, and kissing it, "contains his hair—he begged that I would keep these memorials until we again met."

Emily saw that the ring was one which Henry had constantly worn—that the hair was his. He had given her no ring—he had pressed upon her no memorial; she felt that she was then nothing to him, and that Maria was the beloved of his heart! She could no longer command her feelings, but imprinting a tremulous kiss upon the fair forehead of her faithless friend, fled to the refuge of her own apartment.

Miss Woodville was too highly principled to encourage in herself an attachment which she had reason to believe was not returned; she, therefore, proposed to pay a long promised visit to some distant relatives, at the time of Seymour's next vacation.

Mr. Morris had a sister-in-law, the widow of a lieutenant-colonel, who, after his death, continued to reside in town, he having left her a sufficient income to do so with comfort and respectability. This lady was aware of the extreme beauty of her niece, which she thought might probably cause her to gain a good establishment, were she seen and known where it would be appreciated; Mrs. Melton, therefore, invited Maria, to spend the first season after her quitting school with her in London. The

invitation was gladly accepted by Maria, not that she had herself any matrimonial project in view, since her affections were fixed upon Seymour; but that she might show her charms to an admiring throng, and thus increase her value in his eyes, and as she knew Emily would be from home, she had no fear of their meeting.

Maria had been but a short time in town, ere the fame of her beauty caused her aunt's society to be sought in those circles into which she had not before penetrated. Numberless were the proposals of marriage which she declined; at length she became acquainted with Lord Benfield, who, although more than double her age, was captivated by her charms. His rank and fortune were such as to distance all competitors, and Mrs. Melton looked forward to very soon having the honour of calling her niece by the title of viscountess. Lord Benfield had not absolutely laid his title and fortune at the feet of his fair enslaver, but it was evident to all around, that she could bring on an *éclaircissement* whenever she wished; but, as if dubious what course to pursue, at the same time that she encouraged his attentions, she avoided an explanation. Affairs were in this

state when Henry Seymour unexpectedly visited the metropolis, and met Maria at a private ball. Her love for him, which the gaiety and dissipation in which she was plunged, added to the admiration she had excited, had for a short time smothered, now burst forth with redoubled violence, and equally to the surprise and displeasure of Mrs. Melton, Lord Benfield was entirely discarded.

Soon after this, Maria returned home. At the midsummer vacation, Mr. Seymour left college. The day on which he arrived at his father's, he proceeded to pay his respects to his friends at the parsonage, where he found Emily and Maria seated together; the former, who had only been a few days returned from visiting her relations, was quite unlike the Emily from whom he had parted at Christmas. She was pale, thin, and dejected; she did, indeed, greet his entrance with a smile, but it was one of so equivocal a description, that it was impossible to conjecture whether pain or pleasure predominated. Shocked, and somewhat mortified, at this reception, he turned towards Maria, who had just returned from town, radiant in health and beauty, and who, frankly extending her hand to the young academician,

pleasure emanating from her eyes, and mantling in her cheeks, openly expressed her gratification at seeing him again. Emily, conscious equally of the difference of her reception, and the cause, could not control her feelings, but, bursting into tears, left the room.

Mr. Seymour, in painful surprise, instantly followed, notwithstanding Maria, in her sweetest tones, and with the most insinuating look, conjured him to remain. Having arrested the retreating footsteps of Emily, he entreated to know the cause of her cold and altered manner. An explanation ensued, from which it appeared that Emily had rightly believed herself more dear to Henry Seymour than any other being and that she had only erred when she imagined that even for a moment he could have preferred Miss Morris.

In the happiness derived from the explanation of their mutual sentiments, they forgot how quickly moments fled; whilst to Maria, her bosom torn by the conflicting passions of love, jealousy, and anger, they seemed lengthened into hours, until no longer able to contend with her feelings, she returned home to brood upon her disappointed hopes; for she doubted not that in this interview an *éclaircissement* had

taken place and that all her arts had been discovered.

In answer to Emily's questions respecting the ring and locket, Henry Seymour said it was quite true that he had given her the former, in consequence of her requesting it as a token of friendship ere they parted, and that she had herself insisted upon replacing it by one from her own finger, which he had taken off the instant he entered his own home, placing it in a drawer, where, to the best of his knowledge, it had remained ever since. For her being possessed of a lock of his hair, he could not account—if it really were his, she must, he said, have pursued some method of procuring it, which to him was quite inexplicable.

Emily, in the midst of her felicity, pitied her friend, who, she doubted not, had suffered her wishes to deceive her into a belief that she possessed the love of Henry. She did not for a moment suspect, what was really the case, that Maria had long been aware of their mutual affection, but intent only on following the bent of her own headstrong passion, she had wished by artifice to estrange them from each other, and then trusted through her own attractions to succeed in gaining the heart of Henry.

But Miss Morris knew not the noble mind of him whom she thus hoped to gain. To look at beauty like hers without admiration was impossible; but it was admiration of a totally different nature to that inspired by the touching beauty of her friend, whose sweet angelic countenance seemed to draw the thoughts of the beholder towards a better world.

General Seymour and Mr. and Mrs. Woodville had long perceived the mutual attachment of Henry and Emily, who were almost equally dear to them all. Friends and fortune, therefore, alike smiled upon the youthful pair. Yet Emily had one drawback to her own happiness —Maria Morris, she feared, was unhappy, and through her means.

Several days elapsed and she did not call at the parsonage, neither, when Emily called at Mr. Morris's, would she receive her. Emily wrote a note to inform her friend of the explanation which had taken place between Seymour and herself. This she did in the most delicate manner, without even alluding to the former having expressed an attachment to him, lest she should imagine she meant to triumph in her disappointment This information found Maria shut up in her own apartment, in a state of

mental despondency, from which it roused her almost into distraction.

I had at that time been nearly two years at home on leave of absence from India, where I had been stationed for many preceding years. During this period, I spent all those hours that could be spared from my own connexions, with Mr. and Mrs. Woodville, or General Seymour and his son, consequently I became, as lookers on frequently are, better acquainted with the game which was playing before me, than some of those actually concerned in it.

There was at this period a regiment of cavalry stationed at the town we resided near, with the officers of which General and Mr. Seymour, with myself and many other gentlemen, were upon one occasion engaged to dine. After the removal of dinner, as we were enjoying our wine, the door of the mess-room was suddenly thrown open, and Miss Morris entered, with dishevelled locks, and a small poniard in her hand, when throwing herself at Seymour's feet, she made a most impassioned declaration of her attachment; accused him of cruelty—of insensibility, in preferring one so cold, so passionless as Emily Woodville, to her.

During this time, Seymour was vainly en-

deavouring to prevail upon her not thus to expose herself, but allow him to conduct her home.

"Home!" she repeated, "never: if you will not promise me your hand, you shall see me expire at your feet."

Hitherto we had remained in stupid amazement; but I now started up, seeing her raise her poniard, and in the ungovernable state of her passions, thinking it not improbable that she might plunge it into the breast of Seymour or herself, and suddenly wrested the weapon from her hand. She shrieked aloud; then dashing upon the ground a locket and ring, she exclaimed, "If I cannot move your heart of flint, I will expose you; see, see how I spurn your gifts."

Then stamping furiously on the locket, it was instantly shivered into pieces.

By this time, the whole party were in confusion, in the midst of which she was seized with violent hysterics, and we then conveyed her to the house of a friend, to whom she had that day come on a visit. Knowing how much such a circumstance would affect Miss Woodville, her friends very judiciously kept it from her knowledge; but Miss Morris, who had before forced herself into the presence of Seymour (when finding that her professions of love made no impression, she had resolved to make

a public exposure of it), now visited the parsonage; and although orders had been given by Mr. and Mrs. Woodville that she should not be admitted, she resolutely advanced to the room in which their daughter was seated alone, when, giving way to the violence of her passions, the gentle Emily was so much alarmed by such an exhibition as to be seized with a very severe illness in consequence.

Mr. Morris, finding all his efforts to curb his daughter's violence unavailing, took her from home, hoping that when Mr. Seymour and Miss Woodville were indissolubly united, she would become more reasonable. I now took the liberty of an old friend of both families, and urged them to forward the union of the two young people, as soon as Miss Woodville's health would admit of it. My advice, I believe, was followed, as I heard from Seymour not many weeks afterwards that he was made the happiest of men.

My leave of absence having expired, I was obliged to quit England prior to that event taking place, but my letters from home informed me that not long afterwards Lord Benfield gave Seymour the living which had been promised him on the death of the old incumbent. I was likewise informed that Miss Morris had written

to her friend Emily, expressing her deep regret at her extravagant conduct, and soliciting the pity and pardon of those who had not like herself been left from infancy to the guidance of unbridled feelings. Mrs. Seymour, artless herself, suspected not art in others, and being ignorant of the most flagrant part of Miss Morris's conduct, readily forgave her, attributing those improprieties, of which she had been guilty, rather to a temporary aberration of mind, than to any depravity of disposition.

In due time Mrs. Melton again invited her niece to spend a season in town, when with improved beauty and captivation of manners, she was once more thrown into the society of Lord Benfield, who could not resist the lures thrown out again to inthral him, and ere the season was at an end, Maria Morris became the Viscountess Benfield.

During two or three years after my return to Hindostan, I received frequent letters from Seymour, and other friends in my own neighbourhood; but as my own relatives did not live long, and I was removed into the interior of the country, where it was more difficult to obtain letters, my correspondence with many of my friends ceased, and amongst others that with Mr. Seymour. Thus, as during many

years I mixed in distant and varied scenes, I lost sight of my former friends.

When after an absence of twenty years I returned to my paternal property, I found not one individual left of those whom I had known so intimately, with the exception of a servant, brought up by my father, whom I had last seen in the prime of life, but who now, gray-headed and nearly bald, welcomed me to the Hall. The older members of the families whom I had known, were all removed by death; of the younger ones, some were married, and fixed in distant countries — others were pursuing the various professions into which they had entered, some in foreign countries, some in the metropolis—others with whom I had been but slightly acquainted, were the fathers and mothers of numerous young men and women, and in their own connexions had nearly forgotten that such a being as myself had ever existed.

Perhaps it is scarcely possible to conceive any thing more desolate than that man, who, with a heart yearning for kindly intercourse with his fellow-creatures, returns, after an absence in a foreign country for nearly a quarter of a century, to his former home, and finds himself quite alone, without a relative—without a friend—where once affectionate looks and

kind greetings met him at every turn. The seat of my forefathers was therefore a melancholy home for me, and I quitted it to become in very truth a denizen of the world.

In London, I heard that Lady Benfield was looked up to as the "glass of fashion, and the mould of form;" her extreme though voluptuous style of beauty—her symmetry of figure —her fascinating manners—her grace and elegance were the universal theme of admiration and surprise; for her charms seemed rather to increase than diminish with her years. There were, I was told, some persons who ventured to insinuate that her ladyship's conduct was not at all times so correct as was desirable; but the fashionable world called this envy, fastidiousness, ill-nature—and Lady Benfield still moved on "the admired of all beholders."

As I had known Lord Benfield formerly, I called upon him soon after my arrival in town, when he gave me an invitation to dinner, which I accepted; but never again fell into a similar error, since Lady Benfield's reception was so cold and haughty as to make me take the earliest opportunity of escape. From Lord Benfield I heard that my former friends, Mr. and Mrs. Seymour, were well and happy; and I determined immediately to write and propose

paying them a short visit; but was induced to accompany an officer with whom I had served in India, on a tour of some length, at the termination of which some other obstacle intervened; and thus I continued to postpone writing, until the opportunity was lost and to my great regret I learnt that Seymour and his gentle partner were no more.

After reading Mrs. Benfield's narrative, the events which I have now related recurred to my memory with all the vivid colouring which they had worn at the time, although until revived by the perusal of her manuscript, they had nearly faded from my recollection. In my mind's eye I again saw the fine face and noble bearing of Henry Seymour, with the mild angelic countenance of Emily Woodville. I had frequently been struck by a resemblance in "the Recluse" to some one whom I had formerly known; but these looks were so evanescent that ere I could trace them to any one, they were gone. Sometimes it was a quick and brilliant glance of the eye, which suddenly subsiding into one of a more saint-like character, still left an impression of having been known or seen elsewhere. It was in fact Henry Seymour and Emily Woodville combined in their beautiful, but unfortunate daughter.

"Yes!" I silently ejaculated, as I reperused Mrs. Benfield's narrative, "with thy help, Almighty Father, I trust her child will be restored to its inheritance, and its mother to her fair fame."

My young charge had gained an additional ascendancy over my affections, by proving not only the grandchild but likewise the great-grandchild of the friends of my youth.

After giving the extraordinary circumstances in which Horace was placed every possible consideration, it was decided that he should be left under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Morley, whilst I should proceed immediately to town, and consult with some of the most eminent lawyers on the course to be pursued. I was grieved to leave the little fellow, who had twined himself so unaccountably around my heart; but deeming him safer with Mr. Morley than he could be with me in London, I did not hesitate.

On my arrival in town, I applied without delay to a friend of mine, a chancery barrister, whose high talents and learning were equalled by his integrity. He had no sooner heard the history I had to relate, and cast his eye over the papers I took with me, than he exclaimed, "My dear colonel, there is no exercise for talent of any kind—there is neither doubt

nor difficulty in the case; there is every requisite for establishing the claim of your ward—registers of marriage and baptism—attestations signed by his parents, and witnessed by most respectable persons—wills legally executed; in short, more than can be required in any court, either of law or equity. It is impossible—absolutely impossible, that Lord and Lady Benfield, or their son, can be so blind to their own credit and interest, setting justice and natural affection aside, as for a moment to attempt refuting such testimony."

"You do right," replied I, "to set natural affection and justice aside, when speaking of Lord and Lady Benfield; but notwithstanding all you say, they have resisted, and I doubt not still will resist, all that can be adduced in favour of their grandchild's claims."

"Yes," returned Mr. Eldridge, "they resisted the claims of the poor and friendless widow and orphan, the former of whom they found it easy to alarm for the safety of her child! But the wealthy and universally known and esteemed Colonel Thornville is a very different opponent; depend upon it, my friend, they will be fearful of their iniquitous conduct being made public, and will now gladly acknowledge the child."

Knowing what I did of Lady Benfield's natural disposition, and understanding that she held unlimited sway over her husband, I doubted their assent to any amicable arrangement. However, I was too well aware of the talents of Mr. Eldridge to hesitate a moment as to consigning the affair to his management; consequently, he wrote to Lord Benfield, informing him of the death of his daughter-in-law, and that she had appointed myself guardian to her son; adding, that although I was determined to spare neither expense nor trouble for the advantage of my ward, I should greatly prefer an amicable adjustment of his claims, to placing his lordship in the unpleasant situation in which he must appear in a court of justice; therefore, ere any proceedings would be instituted for the recovery of the estate from Mr. Frederick, and consequent establishment of the child's claim to his grandfather's title at his decease, the papers upon which those claims were founded would be open for the inspection of his lordship, or his agent, at the chambers of Mr. Eldridge. That gentleman then wrote a similar letter to Mr. Frederick Benfield, determining to await the result, ere he took any further step in the affair.

The following day Mr. Eldridge received an

intimation from Mr. Wilson, Lord Benfield's agent, that he would wait upon him at any hour he would appoint, to confer on the subject of his letter to that nobleman. When Mr. Wilson arrived, he requested to be allowed to see the documents on which the young gentleman's claim was intended to be made; to which Mr. Eldridge immediately assented, at the same time saying, "You, sir, must be fully aware of their authenticity, and consequently will, I doubt not, see the propriety of advising your clients, if they value their characters in the slightest degree, to acknowledge the boy at once."

"Why, sir," replied Mr. Wilson, in a smooth, hypocritical tone, "I do not purpose denying that these documents have every appearance of being genuine; but it is a serious thing to resign the prospect of being a viscount, and can scarcely be expected whilst there is a hope of ultimate success."

"But there is not even a possibility of success," said Mr. Eldridge.

"It is quite natural and right, sir, that you should say so, and equally proper that I should advance the contrary; but, sir—Mr. Eldridge," and here Mr. Wilson drew his chair closer, and assumed a confidential tone, "there are many difficulties to contend with, for were Lord Ben-

field inclined to admit the justice of his grandson's claim—I say, *were* he inclined to admit that this child was born in wedlock—not that he does so—even then there would be other and great difficulties to encounter: in fact, various causes militate against the possibility of such an admission on the part of his lordship. Mr. Frederick Benfield has, as you know, taken possession of his late brother's estate, which, he says, only force shall wrest from him—his wife says, she married in the expectation of being Viscountess Benfield, and rather than acknowledge the legitimacy of the boy, she would expend half a million of money! Lady Benfield says, that rather than see the child of her eldest son and Miss Seymour become presumptive heir to the honours of her lord, she would see the whole family interred in one common grave! Added to all this, I believe his lordship is, with regard to pecuniary matters, so connected with his son and daughter-in-law, as to make it requisite he should act in this affair as they wish. Under such circumstances, you will perceive there is not much chance of an amicable termination to this business, unless you think it right to accept the offer I am empowered by the honourable Mrs. Benfield to

make, of settling one thousand per annum upon your young client, in return for which, you must resign all these documents."

"Sir," said Mr. Eldridge, rising, "I have with difficulty commanded myself sufficiently to hear you to an end; but having done so, take this answer to the *dis*honourable Mrs. Frederick Benfield, that her husband's nephew requires nothing from her hands—he has a wealthy guardian, who will protect his rights; and for myself, sir, allow me to say, that this is the first dishonourable proposal to which I have ever listened, and that it may be the last, I must request that you will not again trouble yourself to visit me."

Mr. Wilson in vain strove to apologize, saying he had something further to propose from his clients. Mr. Eldridge had rung the bell—the door was already open, and with a distant bow the agent of the Benfields was dismissed. Mr. Eldridge immediately put every thing in train for commencing the suit against Mr. Frederick Benfield, for the recovery of the estate, which would, when gained, establish the rest.

The following day I received a note from Lady Benfield, requesting to see me. At first, I proposed declining this request; but upon

consulting Mr. Eldridge, he thought it possible that she might wish to avoid the disgrace of the impending lawsuit, and that for the sake of my *protégé*, it was my duty to give our opponents one opportunity more of acting with some degree of honour and honesty. On arriving at Lord Benfield's, I was told that her ladyship was in very delicate health; but on being ushered into her boudoir, I found her reclining upon a couch, looking more lovely than when I had last seen her. The delicate tinge upon her cheeks was softened by the shade cast upon her through the muslin curtains, which were nearly closed; and half rising from her recumbent position as I entered, and extending her white and ungloved hand towards me, she assured me, in bland accents, how much she was gratified by again seeing one whom she had from early youth regarded with the sincerest friendship. I was taken by surprise, for her present reception was so unlike that which I had before received, that I was quite unprepared for it.

I soon, however, recovered my presence of mind, and thanking her ladyship for her politeness, begged to know the cause of her summons. But waving my question, she again spoke of the pleasure it gave her, to see one whom she so

highly respected, under her roof—reverted to the happy days she had passed in my society in her youth—and, in short, appeared, what she so well knew how to be, the sweetly amiable and captivating woman. On a younger man, her soft and seductive manner might have had some effect, but I was too old, and knew her too well, to be caught by the witchery of her smiles.

I again endeavoured to draw her attention to the business on which I supposed she had wished to see me, by observing, that I should be glad to receive her commands, as I had an engagement to meet a person on business, in the course of half an hour from that time. She then placed her white hand upon mine, and sighing deeply, said, "I am afraid, my friend, you have been induced to think less kindly of me than I deserve, I have been," and the ready tear started into her practised eye, "I have been cruelly slandered—my finest feelings tortured—my tenderest affections blighted! I have been deceived, where I most trusted—I have met with the basest ingratitude, where I had garnered up my heart! I loved Emily Seymour as tenderly, as devotedly, as if she had been my own daughter—I loved her for her

parents' sake—I loved her still more tenderly for her own. I saw her beautiful, and believed her what she appeared—amiable, artless, and affectionate. I would have made her the wife of my inestimable Frederick, and although his addresses were refused, almost with contempt, I still continued to treat her as my daughter; little conjecturing that she, who assumed such simplicity of character, was at that time carrying on a clandestine intercourse with my eldest son, whose personal beauty had won her affection. Oh!" she continued, as she wiped away the tears which trembled in her eyes, "you cannot imagine what I have suffered from the ingratitude of Emily. She deceived not only me, but her indulgent parents, who confided so entirely in the truth and simplicity of her character, that they expired without the slightest suspicion of the artful part she had acted towards them. During their life she carried on a clandestine correspondence with my son Horace, and at their death accompanied him into a foreign country, where she lived with him under a feigned name. The world spoke of their *liaison*, as such things are usually spoken of; the result was such as might be expected, Horace was killed in a duel which he fought, in defence

of the reputation of his mistress! Even then I would have rescued the misguided young woman from want—from vice. I would have taken charge of the illegitimate offspring of my son; have given him a good education, and have placed him in a respectable situation; but my offer was contemptuously rejected, since she had, with the assistance of some artful persons, with whom she became acquainted during her residence in Switzerland, contrived to fabricate various documents so artfully, as to deceive the most experienced eye, and to forge a tale calculated to win upon the ear, and gain the sympathy and compassion of all who might hear it. By these means she hoped to impose her spurious offspring upon us, as the legal heir to the property and title of Benfield; finding, however, that no lawyer of eminence, or even credit, would undertake such a cause, she disappeared with her child about four years ago, since which time we have never even heard her name. Think, then, my pain, my surprise, at finding that this artful young woman had imposed upon the judgment of Colonel Thornville. Your charitable disposition and philanthropy are well known, but I am sure that the same goodness of heart which would lead you to espouse the

cause of an injured orphan, would prevent your going to law with my son, if convinced that his cause were just. To represent the case as it really stands, was, my dear colonel, the sole cause of my requesting this interview, as, by undeceiving you, I flatter myself I shall not only be able to prevent your incurring great trouble and expense, but likewise much future mortification."

During this long address, which was delivered in the most touching manner, I remained entirely silent; I listened with profound attention, whilst my compressed lips, and eyes earnestly fixed upon her countenance, evinced the effort I was making. When she ceased speaking, I said, "If the documents of which your ladyship speaks, appear so very ingeniously constructed, as to deceive the most experienced judges, would it not be more charitable to believe them genuine, until decided to be otherwise?"

"Ah! my good sir, how like your noble disposition is that generous feeling; you know not how happy I should be, were there a possibility of what has been asserted proving true; for so dear was Emily Seymour to me, that although my own son would lose a title and

good property, were the legitimacy of that child to be proved, yet the knowledge of her innocence would remove a heavy load from my heart, which has long oppressed it—but I know that my son was not married—I know too well that Emily was a wanton—"

At this word I started from my seat, unable to bear more, and hastily quitting the room, notwithstanding she entreated me to remain, I rushed down stairs, determined never again to enter a house, where I should hear the sainted Emily thus calumniated. With difficulty I had contained my feelings within any bounds, but I felt that if I allowed them the least vent, they would burst forth with a violence greater than I wished, in presence of a woman, though so worthless a one as Viscountess Benfield!

Not to dwell unnecessarily upon the various forms which were requisite to be gone through, suffice it to say, that Mr. Eldridge immediately put every thing respecting Horace's claims in such a train, that at the expiration of six months, the cause was decided in favour of my ward, to whom Frederick had to resign the estate which had belonged to his brother, along with the accumulated rental. It was indeed a source of infinite joy to me, to be assured that

the fame of Mrs. Benfield, the mother of my young charge, the daughter of my early friends, was cleared from every stain!

Whilst I wiped a tear of mournful pleasure from my eye, I led the sweet boy to that little mound of earth, where the remains of his mother were deposited, in the churchyard of Denmore, saying, " Kneel, my child, kneel and return thanks to the Almighty Disposer of all good, for the blessings he has now vouchsafed to bestow on thee." The dear little fellow instantly fell upon his knees by his mother's grave, and clasping his hands together said, " Our Father, I thank thee!"

" Poor ill-fated Emily," said I, " thy errors were sincerely repented, and severely atoned for, may thy spirit be permitted to rejoice o'er thy now pure fame, and the brilliant prospects of thy orphan boy!" At that moment a ray of light burst from behind a cloud, which had obscured the sun, and falling obliquely upon the figure of the kneeling child, seemed, to my excited mind, like an emanation from Heaven! My feelings were too deeply affected for conversation, I therefore silently took Horace's hand, and leading him to Mr. Morley, withdrew to my own apartment for the night.

During Horace's early years, I thought no home could be so eligible for my young charge, as that of Mr. and Mrs. Morley. I placed servants in the pretty cottage, which had been inhabited by Mrs. Benfield, that I might, when inclined so to do, make it my residence, and then have my ward with me. I therefore spent great part of each year at Denmore; and when my business or pleasure caused me to be in town, or moving from place to place, I felt convinced that Horace had every advantage that the tenderest affection, and the most anxious solicitude could bestow.

When arrived at the age of ten, I took him to Eton, at the same time placing an establishment at my family seat in Hampshire, as I wished now that my house should be his only home, where I should make a point of receiving him during all his vacations, though we never failed to visit Denmore, at least once in the summer: and the worthy Mr. and Mrs. Morley, spent each Christmas with me. I scarcely need say, that the faithful Morgan formed a part of my establishment in Hampshire, from the time it became the home of her young master.

Immediately upon the termination of the cause

between Horace and his unnatural relatives, Lord and Lady Benfield, with their son, and daughter-in-law left England. They could not brave the scorn and contempt which they would inevitably have met with, had they remained in their native country, after such an exposition of their baseness. Lord Benfield had not a guinea left of his once fine income. Every thing had been seized by his creditors, who applied the rental of the still remaining property, during his lordship's life, to the liquidation of his debts. They were therefore thrown entirely upon the liberality of one of the most *illiberal* of beings, their purseproud daughter, for support. By living together, they proved a mutual torment to each other. Frederick, in losing all prospect of becoming a viscount, had lost the only claim he ever had to the love or respect of his wife; she now, therefore, openly expressed the most unqualified contempt for him, making frequent allusions to those personal defects, which were to him a source of such bitter mortification.

Mrs. Frederick Benfield, although luxurious in her own personal habits, was too penurious in disposition to allow her father and mother-in-law a separate maintenance, choosing rather

to bear the incessant sarcasms of Lady Benfield, than free herself from them, by a sacrifice of part of that income, which was still far beyond her wants. Her ladyship had, in return, to submit to the vulgar illiberality of her daughter-in-law, who daily reminded her, that it was her wealth alone which kept the family from absolute starvation.

Lord Benfield, having no longer any funds with which to pursue his favourite vice of gaming, sunk into one still more destructive to his health: he soon became an habitual drunkard; when finding himself taunted and reviled by all his family, he would frequently, when maudlin, detail to any strangers with whom he might meet, the hardships he endured from his wife and son, and then lament, even in tears, the death of that son, whose worth, while living, had never been acknowledged.

This ill-matched party had resided several years in Rome (Lady Benfield, by the charms of her person, and fascination of her manner, in despite of advancing years, continuing to be courted and admired, in a country where propriety of conduct is but little estimated), when Lord Benfield having been, as usual, taken to bed in a state of intoxication, was found the

following morning to have expired, as was supposed, several hours before, in an apoplectic fit.

Thus ended the career of a nobleman, born to a fine fortune and high rank, with fair talents, and no peculiarly evil propensities; but early left in charge of those, who thought they performed their duty in sending him to school and college, without striving to, give him any fixed principles, by which to steer his course in after-life; he, consequently, when married at an advanced period, to a beautiful but worthless woman, instead of reforming her conduct and disposition by his own example and authority, sought for pleasure at the gaming-table, leaving her to pursue her own road to happiness and fame, unmolested by him. The transition from the gaming-table, to the practice of every other vice is, alas, but too easy! Lord Benfield found it so; and he, who was once the gentlemanly polished nobleman, died a low, drunken debauchee!

Horace, at the time of his grandfather's death, was nearly fifteen years of age. The estate of Benfield, which descended to him with the title, was, in addition to the small property which he inherited from his father, all that remained of the once fine fortune of the Viscounts Ben-

field. Lady Benfield being provided for by her jointure, no longer found it necessary to be a burden to her son and his wife, whom she gladly parted from, since even he whom she had almost idolized, not unfrequently treated her with indignity and contumely. From his wife such treatment did not surprise, and scarcely pained her; but from her favourite, Frederick, it sunk deep in her heart!

When Horace became of age, I was enabled to place a considerable sum of money in his hands, having spent no part of his own property upon his education. With my entire approbation, he devoted the greatest part of this sum towards discharging such of his grandfather's debts as still remained unpaid. When my ward quitted Oxford, he expressed so strong a wish that I should accompany him on a tour to the continent, that I could not refuse myself the gratification of acceding to his request. I was convinced that my experience would be of use in the new world he was about to enter at the same time that my knowledge of human nature, would prevent my being such a restraint, by my constant presence, as to make him regret that he had urged me to be his companion.

We spent two years in viewing all that was most worthy of observation in the different countries of Europe, whilst by visiting various foreign courts, my young companion gained that hign polish which was alone wanting to form the perfect gentleman. At the termination of the period destined for our tour, I had the inexpressible delight of bringing my dear boy back to that country, in which he was destined to take a high station, every thing that my heart could wish. Sensible, affectionate, and intelligent—with a mind highly cultivated, yet humble — sweet-tempered and ingenuous — handsome in person—elegant in manners—spirited in conduct.

Such was the youth I had the pleasure of presenting, on our return, to that sovereign, by whom his many fine and noble qualities were fully appreciated. A young nobleman with so many claims to admiration could not long remain unnoticed by title-hunting mammas, and husband-hunting daughters. He was overwhelmed by attentions, and literally left London, surfeited with adulation, to join me in my country retirement. Although Horace's heart had escaped uninjured from the fascinations of

all the beauties of the metropolis, it was only to surrender itself, without a struggle, to a lovely and amiable girl whom he became acquainted with when in Hampshire.

This young lady was the only child of Sir Charles Limner, a wealthy fox-hunting baronet, who said he had but one objection to Lord Benfield, which was the smallness of his fortune, compared with that his daughter would inherit from himself. As Miss Limner was exactly the wife I would have chosen for Horace had the choice been left to myself, I could not do less than obviate the difficulty, by proposing to settle upon him five thousand per annum, with a promise of at least doubling it at my death. The path of the lovers was instantly smoothed, and I had the satisfaction of making two young and guileless hearts happy.

Horace has now been several years married, and is in possession of every blessing this world can bestow. He and his amiable wife reside principally at Benfield Park; though in spring they generally remain three or four months in town, as Lord Benfield considers it his duty to attend the house of peers. To make their residence there in every respect eligible, I

presented them with a house suited to their rank; that of the late lord having been disposed of when he quitted England.

In town, and by his peers, the viscount is looked up to as a young man of such talent and attainment, as may enable him to become a leading senator, should such ever be his wish. But notwithstanding he is so well calculated by nature and education for shining as a public character, he reposes most happily in the privacy of domestic life. In the country, Lord and Lady Benfield are followed by the blessings of the poor, and the esteem of those in a higher station, with whom they make a point of associating on terms of equality. Lord Benfield has built a pretty cottage within the precincts of the park, in which Mr. Morley, who is appointed domestic chaplain, resides with his worthy wife. Seldom is there a day in which Horace does not visit the kind tutor of his infant years, or see him seated at his own table, whilst the viscountess is equally anxious to show them both all kindness and respect.

Mr. Morley tells me that he has lately been deeply engaged in preparing a system of education for Horace's two boys (the eldest of whom has lately attained his third birthday), by which

he hopes they will be enabled to learn Latin and Greek as an amusement instead of a task. Morgan — the ever-faithful Morgan — is of course *commander-in-chief* of the nursery establishment, and she assures me that Emily Seymour Benfield, the eldest scion of that house, is now, in her fifth year, a *fac simile* of what her lovely but unfortunate grandmother was at the same age.

When Lord Benfield had been married about three years, I was one day seated with him in town, when a servant delivered a message from a lady, who requested me to call upon her at four o'clock that day, at —— Hotel; but as the servant gave no name, and when I sent to inquire it her messenger had left the house, I was doubtful whether to attend to her request. However, as the time was long past when female wiles could have had any effect upon me, and the hotel was one of high respectability, I boldly determined to attend the assignation.

Upon my arrival at the place appointed, and inquiring for a lady who had wished to see Colonel Thornville, a foreign servant, standing in the entrance, advanced, saying his lady had sent to me.

"Who is your lady?' said I.

"Pardonnez moi, monsieur: miladi vil tell."

Thinking the mystery must soon be unravelled, I ascended the stairs without further question. When the door of the room into which I was shown, was thrown open, I perceived a female form extended on a couch. Such a face and form I had never before seen! So wan, so haggard, so spectral! Her cheek-bones nearly protruded through a skin like shrivelled parchment; her lips were thin and colourless; her eyes large, deeply sunk in their sockets, and glassy; in short, her whole appearance was quite revolting.

With her bony, yellow hand she motioned for me to advance, saying, in a hoarse and hollow voice, "I cannot rise, Colonel Thornville, therefore you must excuse me. I sent for you because I wished once more to see you before I die, and I feel that my time is short."

"Once more, madam?" said I, looking earnestly upon features which were quite unknown to me; "I am not aware that I have before had the pleasure of seeing you; nevertheless, I shall rejoice to be of service to you."

As I spoke, she uttered a shrill, unnatural laugh, which made me shrink back.

"You do not know me!" exclaimed she ra-

pidly, half rising from the couch, and looking wildly upon me: "no wonder; for I am somewhat altered since you saw me last; but they tell me I am a great-grandmother, therefore you cannot expect to see me young and handsome."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed I, suddenly struck with the idea that the miserable being before me was Lady Benfield.

"Is what possible?" rapidly interrupting me, "have you then discovered who I am? Do you perceive in this withered, shrivelled form any resemblance to he who was once the most celebrated beauty of the British court? Look at this hand," continued she in bitter accents, extending at the same time her long and fleshless fingers—"this is the hand which contending lovers used to sigh over; behold it now!—But no matter: I sent not to you for this." Then in a more hurried, but subdued tone, 'I am ill, very ill—dying; but I cannot die until I have unburdened my mind to you, and obtained the pardon of my grandson; then—then I can perhaps die."

She now in a wild and unconnected manner proceeded: "You know that I once loved—madly loved Henry Seymour. Had he returned

that love, how different would my fate have been! But he loved another.—Well, let that pass. Since my love could not be gratified, I resolved that my ambition should. I married Lord Benfield—I married for wealth and rank —I married that my fatal beauty might be seen and admired in the only sphere I thought deserving of it. I was admired, even beyond my fondest hopes. My conduct was such as might, under such circumstances, be expected; for I was followed and courted by men of the most fascinating manners and persons, who soon perceived that I was utterly regardless of my husband. Yet I had sufficient respect for appearances to retain a fair reputation.

"Amongst my lovers, none longer retained a dominion over my affections than Sir Edward Hume; and when no longer lovers, we became friends. At Benfield Park I again saw—I again loved—Henry Seymour. I hoped by having his daughter with me, to enjoy more of his company, and perhaps at last to gain his affection. As my passion for him increased, so did my hatred towards her whom I saw in the possession of all the reality of happiness, whilst I had only the glaring counterfeit. The same cause induced me to endeavour to promote my son Frederick's

marriage with their daughter. I was disappointed in all my plans. Sir Edward Hume then saw and loved the young Emily. I was largely indebted to him, and he proposed to cancel my promissory note, if I prevailed upon her to become his wife.

"Here again I was foiled. I soon discovered that my eldest son and Emily were mutually attached; but many reasons militated against their union. I pretended, therefore, not to see their attachment. You know of the contract between my lord and Mr. Jefferson. I it was who urged my lord to alarm his son by a threat to destroy himself—although even then I had obtained secret information of the marriage of Horace and Emily, for they were surrounded by spies—but I resolved that the daughter of Emily Woodville should, never, if I could prevent it, be Viscountess Benfield. In many things I have been foiled, though in one I have succeeded only too well. The revenge I had vainly tried for upon the hated companion of my youth, fell upon the head of her innocent child! I wished to gain the title for my favourite son—you know by what means we strove to attain our ends—there, too, I was baffled. It was I who told

Sir Edward that Emily Seymour was a wanton; therefore on my head rests the blood of my own son! I heard of his untimely end with momentary horror; yet instead of protecting and consulting his widow and orphan, I treated her with contumely, and stigmatized her child as base born!

"At length, she—the sweet and gentle being whom I had loved, hated, and pitied, by turns—died. Did I then feel sorrow and remorse? No—my heart steeled by its own crimes, became daily more hardened against those whom I had wronged. My husband would have had Frederick resign his brother's estate, he would have acknowledged the legitimacy of his grandchild, when you came forward as its advocate and protector; but Frederick and his wife, on whom he depended for pecuniary assistance (having again by his gambling transactions embarrassed his affairs), would not hear of it; and I, with that power which a strong mind ever holds over a weak one, laughed all his scruples to scorn, and gained my point. What a point to gain—to be with my husband and son publicly disgraced! We quitted England, and spent many years in Italy, where, as you know, Lord Benfield died. How we spent those years, it is needless to say. The death of

my lord enabled me to quit my mercenary and purseproud daughter, and to have an establishment of my own. Still courted and admired, I might have married; but I preferred liberty, with an income which in Italy was affluence. I pursued my heedless career of dissipation until disease overtook me. Where were then my numerous friends?—my flatterers?—my gallants? The province of the two latter was not to sooth the agony of acute suffering—they fled to more genial scenes; and of the former, I never had one who deserved the name, except Emily Woodville and her sweet daughter; and how did I reward them? I sent for my son—for him, whom I had loved with more than a mother's fondness—for whose interest I had committed crimes at which I once would have shuddered—I sent, in the anguish of my mind and body, to entreat my Frederick to give me consolation in my sufferings by his presence. He came—but it was to curse the mother who gave him birth!"

Here Lady Benfield became so agitated, that in considerable alarm I rung for her attendant, who assuring me she was frequently thus, gave her some composing medicine; after which, I was on the point of departing, when the hollow voice of the wretched woman said, "Stay,

Colonel Thornville—I shall be better soon—do not go."

After a few minutes' cessation from speech, Lady Benfield again begun:

"Where was I?—of what was I speaking? Of my unnatural child? Frederick Benfield cursed me for having given him birth—for having by my indulgence fostered all his evil propensities—but, above all, for having aided him in marrying the despicable woman to whom he was united. Whilst these cruel words issued from the mouth of him whom I had almost idolized, I fell back on my pillow insensible; and when I again spoke, it was in raving madness! For some weeks I continued in that state, during which, no human being, with the exception of my servants and medical attendants, came near me.

"When my delirium ceased, I determined instantly to return to England. My physicians declared, that in my very precarious state of health, such a journey and voyage would be certain death. I cared not for death—any thing was more desirable to me than remaining in a country, the very air of which seemed to me polluted by the breath of my ungrateful son. I arrived at this place a

week ago; I inquired for Lord Benfield—for you; I heard you were both in town, and sent for you, not only that I might unburden my heart to you, but that you might tell me whether you think my grandson can be prevailed upon to see me, when he hears that I am on the verge of the grave. When to others I have appeared in the full enjoyment of health, whilst running my gay and dissipated career, I have been privately suffering from a painful—an incurable disease, for many years; though it has only lately taken a form which has made me an object of disgust, rather than of admiration. I scarcely recollect the time when I could sleep without the aid of opium—to that blessed medicine I owe every cessation from pain that I have known for years; though whilst it has relieved my agony, it has, I sometimes think, nearly deprived me of my senses. Yet I know what I say and feel but too well! Will you bear my message to my grandson? Will he visit his dying grandmother?"

Here she ceased her rapid and almost incoherent speech, for the first time giving me an opportunity of replying. I assured her of the readiness with which he would attend her summons.

"Then fly," said she, "bring him quickly,

or it will be too late." Being of opinion that not a moment was to be lost, I acceded to her wish without delay, and was rejoiced to find the viscount at home, who instantly accompanied me to —— Hôtel.

The meeting between Lady Benfield and her grandson, was a truly affecting one. As we entered the room, she fixed her glazed eyes upon him with a look of keen inquiry, and then with a wild scream, uttering, "It is—it is himself!" She attempted to spring from the couch, but in doing so, sunk upon the floor ere we could aid her; when raised, and placed again in her former position, she remained for a few moments with her eyes cast down; then, with a bewildered look, raising them, "Is it a dream, or did I see him? Yes," looking Benfield in the face, "it is Henry Seymour—why are you come? Your wife was happy; I did not destroy her! It was she who destroyed me! Your daughter—is it for that you call me to account? I did not kill her, so—so—" then, with her shrivelled hand, she stroked back the beautiful silken hair, which, as her grandson bent his head to conceal the tears which trickled down his cheeks, shaded his forehead; "why, who is

this? This is Horace, my son, come to accuse me of causing his death; this—this is too much;" and, falling back into the recumbent position from which she had again half raised herself, she sobbed convulsively.

Deeming it improper she should be without female aid, I had desired her maid to remain in the room; she now, therefore, administered a large dose of opium, which composed her nervous system so far, that on my desiring Lord Benfield to retire to a distant part of the room, she addressed me by name, and asked if her grandson would not come. I replied, "He has been here, dear madam."

"Been here?" repeated she, "I thought I saw Henry Seymour and my son Horace."

"You saw your grandson, and in the excited state of your feelings, added to the resemblance he bears to his father and grandfather, you probably forgot that they were no more."

"Forgot! Oh, no, no; I cannot forget the murder of my son! but if it be my grandson, let me again see him."

He now came forward, and sunk upon one knee by her couch.

"To me!" she wildly shrieked, "to me does

the son of Horace Benfield and Emily Seymour kneel? Oh! that I could kneel to you, to supplicate—to entreat forgiveness."

"Talk not of forgiveness, my dear madam; I have nothing to forgive—I beseech you compose yourself, and let me have the pleasure of believing that my presence has been beneficial rather than injurious to you."

"Nothing to forgive—nothing, poor boy—how idly you talk! Know you not that I destroyed your father—your mother, too; but they died happy; would that I could do so!" Then grasping his hand—"Say you forgive me, pray say that!"

"I do indeed forgive you, as I myself hope to be forgiven."

"Bless you—bless you for that—yet, who am I that dare to bless you? Will you pray for me? Say that you will pray for me."

"Indeed I will, most readily; but I wish you would allow me to bring some one more calculated to administer consolation to a wounded spirit than myself."

"No, no, no," she reiterated, "no priest, I will not have a priest; but listen to my last words, my grandson"—and she spoke with a hollow, but solemn and distinct tone—"and

let them never be forgotten. I have been through life the slave of my own passions; and consequently, amid all the glare of fashion, rank, and splendour, I have been wretched! My conduct has been a continued tissue of dissimulation! Happy are you, young man," placing her hand upon his, "in having been brought up in the knowledge of your duty towards God and man—I knew neither—no religious principles were instilled into my infant mind, and when they were afterwards imparted to me, they took no root, for the soil was unprepared and barren, but were blown away by the first breeze which passed over them. The fond indulgence of an indolent parent left my naturally violent passions without control—and——"

At this instant she was attacked with violent convulsive spasms, which the attending physician, on his arrival, declared to be only the prelude to her death. From this period, no connected sentence escaped her lips, but grasping her grandson's hand, she held it firmly, whilst between the spasms, she exclaimed, in accents of terror, "Oh, save me—save me—I cannot die—I am not ready. Henry Seymour—Horace—Emily—pray for me!'

At length her voice became so indistinct, that we knew not what words she muttered; her hand relaxed its firm grasp: death had indeed seized upon his victim; and all that remained of the once beautiful and fascinating Viscountess Benfield, was a discoloured and revolting corpse. How different was the termination of her life, to that of the gentle being whom she had so deeply injured!

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Benfield continue to reside in Italy; mutually detesting each other, yet living together, because the parsimonious disposition of the latter inclines her to submit to the society of a person she hates, rather than part with such a proportion of her immense wealth, as might induce her husband to agree to a separation, which, although it would release him from a wife whom he equally ridicules and despises, he will only accede to, upon her resigning to him a considerable sum of money, in addition to the large sum he obtained at his marriage. Thus they live, in the enjoyment of no pleasure, beyond that of mutual sarcasms, on the personal and mental defects of each other. Their greatest enemies could scarcely wish them a more severe punishment.

Sir Edward Hume never recovered his spirits

from the hour of Horace Benfield's death; he was then impressed with an instantaneous conviction that he had been duped, and he only felt surprise, that he could ever have suffered himself to believe that Emily Seymour could be otherwise than pure as unsullied snow. He became eventually a decided hypochondriac, and although he lived many years after that fatal duel took place, he never again returned to England, nor entered into society.

The amiable Mr. Gulstein is no more; he died as he had lived, in the midst of those by whom he was revered and beloved, and happy in leaving his daughter under the protection of an exemplary husband.

Mr. and Mrs. Walsdorf, whom Horace and I visited when in Switzerland, have promised to be at Benfield Park in the course of the ensuing summer, with their young family, the eldest of whom, a son, is to remain in England, under the immediate patronage and care of the viscount, who purposes providing for him in the church.

Mr. Marsden has been several years dead, after leading a life of penury and exile from his family and country, for more than twelve years; by his death, Mrs. Marsden and her son were released from a state of dependence upon her

friends, as she then came into possession of such part of her own property as was in settlement.

Having now disposed of all my *dramatis personæ*, I will only add, that Horace has indeed fulfilled the dying wish of his mother; for, by his numerous excellences, he has repaid me a thousand times for any thing I may have had the power of doing for him; and will, I doubt not, when Providence shall think fit to remove me, endeavour by his affectionate care, to sooth my last hours!

THE END.

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